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***Under the patronage
 of the most holy
 Virgin Mary,
 may we be freed
 by her motherly
 intercession
 from all evils on earth
 and merit the
 attainment
 of eternal joys
 in heaven.***

*(Adapted from the Opening Prayer
 of the Common of the Blessed
 Virgin Mary)*

From The Editor's Desk
 A COMPASSION WITH FEET!

Imagine God looking down on this world and seeing the many countries and peoples that exist. If we ask ourselves what it is from all that he sees, that is of most concern to him; it must surely be those of his children who are starving, who are homeless, who are being murdered or persecuted, who are, in short, suffering so unnecessarily. And if we ask what it is that he most wants from us it must surely be to do what we can to end the suffering of his children.

For the Jews, entry into the Kingdom of God meant the exact observance of the Law. Jesus challenged this belief and gave a different answer. Entry into the Kingdom of God, he asserted, is through compassion. This is the road *and no other*.

*I was hungry and you gave me food,
 I was thirsty and you gave me drink,
 I was a stranger and you made me welcome...
 Take as your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation
 of the world (Mt 25:35, 34).*

Imagine a father with two children. One is doing some homework and asks the father for help. Of course, the father will get up and give the child a hand. But while he is helping this child, he notices his other child outside the window being attacked by a gang. He immediately gets up, leaves the child doing the homework and goes to the aid of the child being beaten. At this moment, the child being beaten has a prior claim on the father's attention and time. It is not that he loves this child any more than the one doing homework, but because of the circumstances in which the second child finds himself, this child is the focus of the Father's attention at this time. It could be no other way.

Similarly, as God looks down on this world, those of his children who are suffering must surely be the ones who command his attention and energies in a way that the rest of us do not. That does not mean that he loves us any less. But what God must want more than anything else is an end to this suffering of his children. Hence, our compassion is the primary plea which God makes of us.

And how are we to be compassionate? Clearly by the way we treat others, especially the less fortunate in our community. But we must go beyond that. We must ask questions of our society. And the key question here is surely: Why are the poor, the homeless, the starving the way they are? Only if we answer this question correctly can our compassion be effective and get to the cause of the suffering.

But, God does not expect us to change the world single-handed, but simply to play our little part in bringing about a fairer and more just world, starting on our own doorstep. In all that we do and in all that we can say, our concern should be to lift the burden from the shoulders of some of God's own children in pain.

Fr. Ian Douulton, sdb

THE REAL HONEYMOON

by Mons. Gianpaolo Dianin

It's not a matter of a few days or weeks, but about the journey together of growth, without fake idealisations, and it lasts a lifetime.

Love is a magic word that has infinite meanings. It is advocated by everyone and each person attributes a different meaning to this experience that is difficult to define because it changes as the person grows and matures. For an adolescent, love has the face of an irresistible attraction that fills the heart but also makes one feel sick; for a young adult, it has the character of an experience that nourishes life, makes days beautiful and holds the promise of eternity; for an adult, it can become a life choice made up of loyalty and mutual dedication; for an elderly person, it is a profound friendship that is part

of his or her now dual identity.

In all these experiences, two dynamics operate: *eros*, which is the desire for the other because he or she fills my life, and *agape* as the desire to give oneself to the other because of his or her benevolence. Erotic passion on the one hand, benevolence on the other. Attraction, emotion, feeling, drive on one side, and gift, altruism, benevolence and sacrifice on the other. There is an exchange between the two loves that in the seasons of life may give more weight to one than to the other, but they remain inseparable and both are necessary.

Eros and agape are the two



Marriage gives spouses that grace that makes them artisans of love without any idealisation: "grace that educates the heart and the deeds". The true honeymoon is just that and lasts a lifetime.



wings of conjugal love. Eros is like a fire that kindles love, it leads one to seek and desire the other as something I cannot do without, as a gift that can fill my demand and need for love. Eros, to use an image, is made up of many words that only agape can put in order to transform them into a meaningful discourse. Eros has the traits of a promise, that of filling my thirst for love, but the promise can only be realised by the agape that can keep the fire of eros alive.

Love entrusts the couple with the task of setting to work, of building a bridge between the two that will unite them and that must rest on the two pillars of eros and agape. On that bridge, two different people, a man and a woman, can meet and love each other in the knowledge that becoming one flesh will be the work of a lifetime and theirs will always be a task of 'craftsmanship'.

The Apostle Paul in his wonderful hymn to charity tells us that love is magnanimous and benign, it is not envious, it is not puffed up, it forbears, believes, excuses and forgives. It is not a matter of definitions, but of actions that continue over time and of horizons that are never

conquered land, but always a promised land to which one approaches and recedes without ever being able to possess it. The director of this craft is agape, which is not patient love, but love that slowly makes me patient: it is not love that excuses grief, but love that slowly guides me to forgive everything between ups and downs, conquests and failures.

It is striking that in the hymn to charity there are three affirmative verbs and eight negations. On the one hand it is said that love is magnanimous, benevolent and true, on the other hand it is affirmed that love is not envious, does not boast, is not puffed up, is not disrespectful, does not seek its own interest, does not become angry, does not take into account evil received, does not enjoy injustice. All these terms contain the beauty and at the same time the drama of love, but above all they make it clear that love is a task, a real labour on oneself and one's relationship. Finally, the Pauline hymn seems to explode in the concluding statements that sketch the summit of love that forgives all, believes all, bears all, hopes all and suffers all. □

WORDS FOR THE SEASON OF LENT

by Sister Marzia Ceschia

In this journey that the Church annually accompanies us on, we can identify a number of key words as checkpoints.

The itinerary of the season of Lent (which began on Ash Wednesday) is marked by the liturgy, which progressively introduces us to the central mysteries of our faith: the Cross, Death and Resurrection of Christ, the inexhaustible source of Mercy and Life for those who allow themselves to be drawn by Him (cf. Jn 12:32). In this journey that the Church annually guides us to make, we can identify some key words as stops for verification and reflection.

The admonition with which the Lenten journey opens is that of conversion: "Return to me with all your heart, with fasting, weeping and mourning" (Jl. 2:12). Conversion demands a decision to reorient one's very existence starting from the heart, from that most intimate space of our person, from the 'affections' that in various ways determine our choices. our faithfulness and unfaithfulness.

To convert is not only a moral attitude, but implies returning to the starting point of our life: the Father's Love that asks us to belong to his Kingdom with an authenticity, assuming its logic, behaving as sons. To be converted means to start afresh from God, not from our self-centredness, our selfishness, which shuts us up in the solitude of self-reflection.

In this context we can understand the value of the second word we are dwelling on: penance. It is not just a matter of practising asceticism (which is undoubtedly one aspect of it), nor is it reduced to 'doing penance'. The saintly Pope Paul VI pointed out in the Apostolic Constitution *Paenitemini* (17



February 1966) that penance 'is therefore, already in the Old Testament, a personal religious act, which has as its goal love and surrender to the Lord.'

Francis of Assisi gives us a concrete and enlightening example of this at the beginning of his Will and Testament as he narrates the fundamental circumstance of his conversion: "The Lord gave me, Brother Francis, in order to begin to do penance thus: when I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers. And as I withdrew from them, what seemed bitter to me was changed to sweetness of mind and body. And afterwards, I stayed a little while and went out of the world."

Francis' memory allows us to perceive a special link between doing penance and being merciful, that is, lovingly taking on the misery of others in the awareness that each of us is in dire need of receiving mercy from the Lord, of feeling that what is bitterness in ourselves is converted into sweetness.

To live reconciled with the struggle often, to tolerate ourselves and, more often, to tolerate others is a grace that the Lord works in those who humbly ask Him for mercy, who implore patience and compassion from Him, the fruit of a heart that knows where to base its peace even in the midst of storms.

I truly experience reconciliation if I am capable of a feeling of hope: "And here we are capable of surrendering to God that which assaults our heart: here is the source where we can find the fresh momentum," wrote Brother Roger of Taizé in one of his letters

that remained unfinished.

Even almsgiving is a form of reconciliation: it is not a mere act of pity towards those more disadvantaged than ourselves, but the tension to reform a balance between protecting my dignity and the dignity of everyone else.

The words of Fr Primo Mazzolari in *Tempo di credere* (A Time to believe) resonate strongly and significantly in this context: "In the presence of the crib, as in the tavern at Emmaus, only one who has nothing is someone. Only one who has nothing can speak to him. If one pities those who die in the trenches or at sea, he has no right to speak. If one has no heart for those who have lost their home, their country, their church... he has no right to speak. If one does not hunger and thirst for justice for all the despoiled, for all the oppressed, one has no right to speak. I have no right to speak. My comfort outrages me, my selfishness smites me, my comfort abases me to the point of taking away all my right to speak."

In this perspective, fasting also makes sense - it really serves the spirit - when its outcome is sharing and growth in fraternity. It is in these dimensions that the work of transformation is visible and concrete, that prayer during this Lenten season brings about on us and in us, forming us to the readiness to share Christ's passion for mankind, trying to live, as far as we are able, the "giving of one's life" with gratuitousness so that our sister and brother may experience greater freedom in being loved. □

YOU CAN DO IT!

Anastasia Dias

He's taken away my estate," thought the old woman that night, as she cried herself to sleep. Her husband was dead, she had no money left in the bank and her food supply was quickly running out.

The estate she once possessed was given to her by her father as a marriage gift. After her husband died, her rich neighbour had snatched it from her.

She went to the court every morning but she received no response. Days went by, people who saw her pass on the way to the court, told her to give up.

"You're going to die soon, why do you even bother?" said one of her relatives.

"Aunty, if you run out of food, I'll bring you some every day", said another.

The old lady wasn't ready to give up, not just yet. She kept going to the court. The judge had been noticing her every single day. One day, tired of her visits to the court, he went up to her and asked her, "What do you want from me?"

She explained her situation to him and the judge resolved her case. The old lady got back her estate and lived the rest of her

short life without any more tears.

This was a famous parable that Jesus told His disciples, mentioned in the Gospel of Luke. As then, so today, it still teaches us to never stop praying. But, there's something more to it.

Before we get to that, I want you to pause for a moment. Take a deep breath. Now, breathe out.

How many times have you and I wanted to give up?

People claimed we are up to no good, situations came up that made us feel worthless, we didn't believe in ourselves so we just threw up our hands and gave up.

What else could we do?

You can stop me right now, saying, *Wait, wait, wait, you're right. I have given up multiple times, Anastasia. You are right. But there*



were also times that I didn't give up. I kept trying, you see? And, and, and, you know what? I did it. Despite what people said, I did it! Regardless of the circumstances, I did it. And, even though I did not believe in myself, I did it. You know why, because I did not give up. I kept trying.

I kept writing, though people said I couldn't write.

I kept singing, though my music teacher said I had no talent for it.

I kept studying, though everyone around me claimed I was dumb.

I kept trying when my family fell apart.

I didn't give up when my friends left me.

I spent many sleepless nights and endured many tough days.

Nevertheless, it's all worth it now.

Brothers and sisters, this is the message of the parable.

Yes, you must pray relentlessly but you must also keep trying again and again. Right now, you may not be doing your dream job, you may be living alone, longing for a friend or a life-partner, you may be wanting to travel the world. Right now, there may be people around you who say, *forget it, you can never do it.*

You may believe them and say *yes, they are telling the truth.* However, what is actually true is that you and only you have the ability to decide what you want in your life. Once you know what you want, you can work towards achieving it. Of course, there are going to be good, bad and ugly



days. There are going to be people who discourage you. You may even doubt yourself. The good news is that it's not the end of your story, not just yet. There's more to it.

If you want that job, work towards it.

If you want a friend, reach out to people and get to know them for who they are.

If you want to travel the world, work hard, save money and do it.

Don't let anything or anyone, even yourself, stop you.

We're three months into this new year, what are the things that you've accomplished so far and what do you wish to accomplish? Make a list. Start with five things. Keep them in your heart. Pray over them. Think of them often. And, work towards making them happen.

You want to win that competition. You want to lead people. You want to serve people. You want to change the world.

You can. Take the following lessons with you wherever you go: Don't give up. And, never stop trying.

Have a blessed Lenten season. □

MISSION MONGOLIA - I

Battulga, Yanjinpagam, Usukhbayar are three boys like many others. They live in Mongolia, and like millions of other boys around the world, they owe a debt of gratitude to Don Bosco because, thanks to his Salesians and the help of so many people of goodwill, their lives have been given a new direction and they can now hope for a better future.

This is how they themselves tell their stories.

My name is **Battulga** and I am 26 years old. I arrived at the Don Bosco Centre in 2005, after living on the streets for two years. It was a terrible experience: I faced many difficulties; and was even beaten on several occasions by other street kids.

I am very grateful that God sent someone to take me to the Don Bosco Centre. I stopped having to face the cold, hunger and hardships of street life. We learnt how to plant vegetables, feed livestock and other practical tasks. After the 9th grade, I went to the Don Bosco Technical School to study hydraulics. During my apprenticeship I worked with one of the

biggest companies in town, which was so pleased with my work that it offered me a job. During my time at the centre, from 2005 to 2014, I learnt a lot about discipline, a work ethic, punctuality and even... how to cook. I loved cooking and often prepared meals for the children at the weekend. Now, I am a professional cook. Sometimes I think that if I had gone to another centre, I would not have realised the full value of life, as I did at Don Bosco! I hope that many other children have the same opportunities I had. I thank all those who made this possible and who continue to offer a new opportunity to so many children and young people.

My name is **Yanjinpagam**. I am a sewing teacher at Don Bosco School. I grew up healthy and strong until the age of five, but suddenly my health deteriorated and I started having serious bone problems. My back started to curve and I began to lose mobility. My legs were gradually paralysed; I was unable to speak or stand. After seven years in bed, I

was transferred to the capital and operated on at the age of 12. The operation went well and I partially recovered the use of my legs. At 12, I finally entered school for the first time. From then on, I attended secondary school and technical education at Don Bosco. After graduation I was very worried because of my physical disability, I did not know if any company would hire me.

However, to my surprise, the school director approached me and asked me to become a lab assistant and offered me a very good salary. I was overwhelmed with joy. Later I was offered a scholarship to study at one of the most prestigious fashion design universities in the country. I worked and studied at the same time. To this day, I work as a sewing teacher and support my family. My life has changed for the better. I have been truly blessed. Unfortunately, my back has deteriorated due to osteoporosis and my spine has gradually weakened. However, I am deeply grateful to God and Don Bosco for giving me the opportunity to change my life. Thanks to all the benefactors who have



The Salesian spirit works miracles even in faraway Mongolia

generously supported the work of the Salesians in Mongolia.

My name is **Usukhbayar**. I came to 'Don Bosco' Technical Institute and Care Centre in 2017. A Salesian from Darkhan introduced me to the care centre after noticing that I had some family problems: my father had recently died and my mother had to take care of me and all my siblings - nine in all. We all grew up with the Salesian community in Darkhan. This helped my mother a lot. All the members of my family are Catholic and go to church together. Yes, I like this place, it is like my home because it has helped me a lot to grow as a person.

I feel good and I am happy to have taken a step forward. Now I am preparing to start a new school term. When I arrived, I was homesick, especially when my father died. Now that Don Bosco is my home, I want to stay here. If I have any problems, the

(Continued on pg. 30)



Form IV

Statement of ownership and other particulars about the newspaper:

Don Bosco's Madonna

1. Place of Publication: St. Paul's Press, 58.23rd Rd., TPS III,
Bandra, Mumbai - 400 050
2. Periodicity of Publication: 1st & 2nd of every month
3. Printer's name and nationality: For Bombay Salesian Society
Fr Edwin D'Souza sdb (trustee)
Indian
Don Bosco Shrine Office
Matunga, Mumbai 400 019
4. Publisher's name: - do -
5. Editor's name: Fr. Ian Douulton sdb
6. Name & address of individuals
who own the newspaper and
partners or shareholders
holding more than 1% of capital

The magazine is a non-profit publication

I, Fr. Ian Douulton, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dated: March 1, 2024

Sd/-
Fr. Ian Douulton sdb

Witnesses in & for Our Times



ST. LOUISE DE MARILLAC (March 15)

Born into Controversy

Louise de Marillac was born to an unmarried couple on August 12, 1592 in France. Louis de Marillac, Lord of Ferrières claimed that she was his daughter. Sadly, she never got the chance to know her mother. In all probability, her mother came from among the common people and it would be a scandal for Lord Marillac to have a legitimate heir with an illegitimate partner. It is unknown whether he paid her to go away quietly or whether she chose to disappear after giving birth. What is known is that she was raised by her father and her uncle, Michel.

Louise was brought up in wealth and prestige. She received a good education and was trained in the manners of the Aristocracy. Her father was a widower and had no children from his marriage; he doted on Louise. Sometime later, he married Antoinette le Camus who could not stand the sight of Louise. She refused to live in the same house as her and forced Louis to send his daughter away. Thus, Louise was sent to a boarding school in Paris run by



the Dominican sisters among whom was an aunt of hers. Louise lived there for a few years until her father passed away; she was merely 12 years old. She was then sent to live with a spinster aunt of hers, Valence d'Atticy who groomed her and taught her to manage a house like a lady. While living with her, Louise began to develop a love for the spiritual life. This was due, in no small measure to the devout life of piety that Valence practiced.

Louise felt called to offer her life as a cloistered nun. Accordingly, she applied to join the Daughters of the Passion (Capuchin nuns) in Paris but was not accepted. Biographies on her do not specify the reason for this rejection but it is alluded that her poor health had something to do with it. Her uncle, Michel, who had become her guardian after her father's death, arranged for her to be married. At the age of 22, she was married to Antoine Le Gras, a dignified nobleman who was serving as secretary to Queen Marie. Louise supported Antoine in all his ventures and the couple were blessed with a son whom they called after Louise's uncle, Michel.

Dedicated to the Poor

A quote by Louise will help to put into perspective her preoccupation with the poor: "Be very gentle and courteous toward the poor. You know that they are our masters and that we must love them tenderly and respect them deeply. It is not enough for these maxims to be in our minds; we must bear witness to them by our gentle and charitable care." Although these words were said much later in the life of Louise and in a very different context, they offer us insight into her mind and heart.

From a young age, Louise cultivated sensitivity toward the poor and less fortunate. She knew what it felt like to be unwanted even as a child and so she went out of her way, whenever the opportunity presented itself to share love and show compassion to those who had no one or nothing of their own. She took an active

part in her parish, especially in every initiative that was directed toward the poor.

A little over a decade after marriage, Antoine fell seriously ill. Around this time, Louise began to have visions of the life that God was calling her to. This is what she wrote in her diary in 1623: "On the feast of Pentecost during Holy Mass or while I was praying in the church, my mind was completely freed of all doubt. I was advised that I should remain with my husband and that the time would come when I would be in the position to make vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and that I would be in a small community where others would do the same...I felt that it was God who was teaching me these things and that, believing there is a God, I should not doubt the rest."

She had as spiritual directors, the famous Francis de Sales at one time and the Bishop of Belley at another. While she received good counsel from them, she was restless until she could confide with the mysterious priest whom she saw time and again in her visions.

When her husband died, she decided that she would not marry again and would pursue the religious life. She had attempted to become a nun in her youth but was told that God had 'other plans' for her. This time, however, she was determined but she still had responsibilities towards her son. She put him in a seminary boarding school with the hope that he would become a priest someday. Unfortunately, he couldn't cope with his studies.

In the meantime, she was put

in touch with Vincent de Paul by her spiritual director, the Bishop of Belley. While she immediately recognized him as the priest from her visions, she did not take a fancy to him. She found him repugnant at first and was unimpressed by his peasant-like lifestyle. Vincent counseled her son and took him to the headquarters of the Vincentian society. This gesture touched Louise and she began to dedicate more of herself to the activities promoted by Vincent. The relationship between them began to grow stronger and Vincent even appointed her the official visitor to the Confraternities of Charity that were set up in different parts of France.

Vincent turned out to be more than a spiritual director to Louise; they were like companions who kept in touch regularly when they were in proximity and through letters when they were apart. At the age of 42, Louise felt that it was time to commit her whole life to the service of the poor and thus was born the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul.

The Daughters of Charity

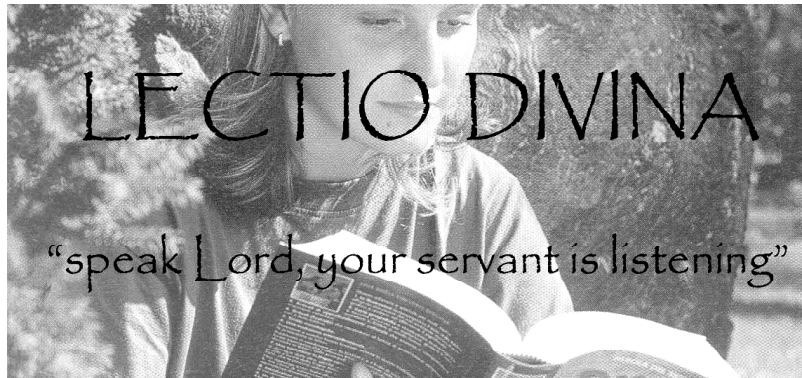
Vincent had founded a society for aristocratic women to do charity called *The Ladies of Charity*. They were supposed to be wholly dedicated to the poor but social status kept them from fully identifying with the poor. They remained a group of aristocratic women who would come together to help the poor and do charitable work. One can imagine how absurd the scene was when a well-dressed, aristocratic lady would drive into a slum with her horse-cart to do charity. The families of the women objected to this

ridiculous behaviour and strongly opposed such forays.

The need for religious, totally divested of aristocratic dress and status, to do such essential work was felt more than ever and so Vincent conceived of the Daughters of Charity. He placed them under the care of Louise. The Daughters of Charity were considered innovators of an active style of ministry. Hitherto, nuns were usually confined to their convents. The Daughters of Charity were mostly out in the streets where the poor were. Louise would say, "Love the poor and honour them as you would honour Christ himself." The poor became the tabernacle where the Sisters were to worship the Lord and contemplate the Divine mysteries. They took as their motto: 'The charity of Christ impels us.'

The Society was officially recognized in 1655 by the Vatican and they took the common dress of peasant women as their habit; it consisted of a grey woollen tunic with a large white head-dress or cornette. Louise passed away in 1660 but had succeeded in establishing the Daughters of Charity in over 40 locations across France. The Sisters offered their services in hospitals, orphanages and other institutions that were beneficial to the poor.

The Congregation continues to serve the poor in over 96 countries. They number around 13,000. They are involved in running hospitals, orphanages, educational institutions, soup kitchens and the like. St Louise was declared the patron of Christian social workers by Pope John XXIII in 1960. □



PALM SUNDAY

by Fr Dinesh Vasava, sdb

Mark 14:1-15:47

1. Reading: Take a moment to read Mark 14:1-15:47, the account of Jesus' passion and death.

2. Meditation: As Christians we enter into Holy Week, let us reflect on the subtleties of the familiar story that culminates on Easter Day. Let us now no longer lose sight of every day this week,

of every line, of every person due to the fact Holy Week offers us the risk to mirror it in our personal lives, to stroll along with Jesus, and to look ourselves in this *Theo-drama*. Reflect on the events described in the passage. Picture the scene of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the Last Supper, His arrest, trial, crucifixion, and burial. Consider the emotions and actions of the people involved, including Jesus, the disciples, the religious leaders, and the crowds.



Reflection On Mark 14: 1-15: 47, Mark 15: 1-39

The Lord's passion is covered in great depth throughout the gospel. Reading these specifics ought to help us comprehend the seriousness of our

sins, which brought about these pains, the depth of the Lord's love for us, which led Him to gladly endure these sufferings, and the need for us to take care not to bring Him further agony by our sins.

A time to imprint more deeply in our hearts the image of a God who is with us, who does not find anything human alien, a servant-God who washes our feet and heals our wounds, an obedient God who listens to His Father in love. A time when millions of minds will be focused on the last hours of Jesus' earthly life. However, one thing that sticks out quite a bit is how Jesus obeyed.

For Jesus, obedience means listening to God, the cherished Father, in love. There is no question that there is no distance, fear, or hesitancy in this hearing, but rather the unconditional and uncontrolled love that comes from the parent. Jesus' response to this love is likewise unconditional, unlimited, and unrestrained.

We will misunderstand Jesus' going into the world of suffering and pain and His giving Himself as a servant. I do believe that we perceive these actions as the heroic initiatives of a son who wants to prove Himself to a father whose love has to be earned, or as the anxious fulfillment of a command given by a Father whose will must be respected. Rather we see in these actions a divine listening to a divine love, a loving response to a loving mission and a free Yes to a free command.

What stands out to you in this passage? What questions or thoughts arise as you reflect on the events leading up to Jesus' crucifixion?

Questions to ponder:

Are we willing to do God's work? Are we desirous to fulfil His commands?

Do we obey Him all time? Like Jesus did?

3. Prayer: Turn your reflections into prayer. Speak to God about your thoughts, questions, and emotions that arise from contemplating the events of Jesus' passion and death. Offer your own prayers of gratitude, repentance, and surrender to God.

4. Contemplation: Enter into a moment of silence and stillness. Allow the words and images from the passage to settle in your heart. Listen for any insights or messages that God may be speaking to you through this passage.

What is God inviting you to understand or experience through this reflection on Palm Sunday? How does this passage deepen your understanding of Jesus' sacrifice and the love of God?

5. Action: Consider how you can respond to what you have learned or experienced through this personal reflection. Are there any actions or changes in your life that you feel prompted to make? How can you carry the message of Palm Sunday and Jesus' passion into your daily life?

As you continue to journey through Holy Week, may this personal reflection on the events of Palm Sunday deepen your understanding of Jesus' sacrifice and inspire you to live out your faith with renewed commitment and love. □

Quiet Spaces

BE GENEROUS NOT TO JUDGE

Pope Francis' homily (edited) at Domus Sanctae Marthae on Monday, March 18, 2019

On Monday morning, 18 March, during Mass at Santa Marta, the Holy Father focused his homily on passing judgement on others and neglecting to forgive. The Lenten period, he said, offers the opportunity to be more merciful and generous in our relations with others.

When the Lord replies to Abraham's advice on how to avoid making mistakes, he answers: "walk before me, and be blameless" (Gen 17:1). This advice to imitate God is also very valuable to us. In the day's Gospel reading from Luke, Jesus offers us advice which is very difficult to carry out: "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (v. 35). "God's mercy", the Pope continued, "is a very great thing, very great. Let us not forget this". Many people believe they have done too many bad things that have earned them a place in hell, but they should be aware that God's mercy is there until the end.



The day's Gospel (Lk 6:36-38) identifies three steps to help us understand how to be merciful. Firstly, "Judge not, and you will not be judged" (v. 37). This does not seem so bad to us but it is a bad habit, which meddles in our life without us even noticing it". The Holy Father thus invited everyone to consider how many times a day they judge others. "If I want to be merciful like the Father, as Jesus tells me, I must think: how many times a day do I judge?". This

"In the 'Our Father' too, Jesus taught us that this is a condition to receive God's forgiveness: 'Forgive us as we forgive'". In doing this, "we are giving God the measure of how he should be with us".

(Pope Francis)

suggested Lenten exercise begins firstly with realizing that we are judgemental.

The second word of advice in Luke's Gospel is to "condemn not, and you will not be condemned" (v. 37). We condemn too much, Pope Francis said, and with this habit of condemnation, we show the Lord how he should behave towards us.

Luke's third word of advice is to "forgive and you will be forgiven" (v. 37). Even though "it is very difficult to forgive ... it is also a commandment that stops us before the altar, that stops us before communion". Jesus, he continued, tells us that if we have something unresolved with our brother, we should forgive him before approaching the altar. "In the 'Our Father' too, Jesus taught us that this is a condition to receive God's forgiveness: 'Forgive us as we forgive'". In doing this, "we are giving God the measure of how he should be with us".

"Do not judge; do not condemn, forgive and in this way you will be merciful like the Father", the Holy Father summed up. However, he acknowledged that this is not easy because "in our daily chatter we judge continuously and we forgive with difficulty". The day's Gospel suggests a solution to avoid judging and condemning others and to foster forgiveness: to "give and it will be given to you" (v. 38). This explains the importance of almsgiving and the reason we should "be generous in giving. Not only material alms, but spiritual alms too: spend time with someone in need, visit someone who is sick, offer a smile". Pope Francis concluded with a suggestion for how to continue this Lenten period: "by at least succeeding in not condemning others in our conversations, not judging and forgiving", and by asking the Lord to show us this grace of generosity. □



THE FORTUNE OF THE SANTA-CROCES

By Pierluigi Menato Tr. Ian Doulton, sdb

Grey and squat, the castle dominated the shallow valley no longer as menacingly as it did in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, but rather it now looked as a crude set of walls that remained standing because the builders had been so good.

The baronial Santa-Croce family had fallen into decline since the time of the Cisalpine Republic (1799), when Anselm Santa-Croce, a diplomat and officer, was killed by Austrian soldiers.

Ambrose, the nephew, had been reduced to practising his profession in a small provincial town.

However, even when he came to penury, he had not wanted to dispose of the ancestral castle, which had become an uninhabitable shack. An invasion of rebellious peasants had done away with all the riches, but Silvester and his wife Leonora, both descendants of servants who had been born in the castle, remained guardians of the walls, waiting for the master to return.

But Ambrose had not had the heart to return to the castle that had been his family's cradle; he had married in the provinces, had lived to be seventy, and upon his death had bequeathed the property to his son Marco, the last surviving member of the Santa-Croce family:

"Try also to keep the castle... I did not sell it even when need gripped me by the throat... Trust

in Providence... Perhaps a benign star will still shine on our name...." For several months after his father's death, Marco thought about those words; they kept ringing in his ears.

"A benign star" he muttered. "Alas, I cannot hope... For us, good fortune has faded since the days of the Cisalpine Republic, and I shall be a lawyer like my father... I won't have a chance to go up there anymore..."

The one who did not lose hope was Silvester, and such was his confidence that he often even managed to drag his old wife into the wake of his enthusiasm.

"Leonora, I am sure that one fine day our master will be as rich as his great-grandfather was... I feel that Providence cannot forget those who have done so well in life, like the Santa-Croces!"

And lo, one fine day it was autumn, and on the flanks of the Santa-Croce hill, the mists were thickening and someone came to ask for hospitality. He was a hunter who had got lost on the mountain during a hare hunt and did not feel like going down to the village at the bottom of the valley, preferring to spend the night within the cracked and chipped walls of the ruined castle. Sylvester welcomed him, doing him the honours of the house and offering him his hospitality. Yes, there was a habitable room, and it was the only one in which a stranger

could spend the night better than in the open misty air: a room with dishevelled furniture, but still a room... And in the meantime, after the guest had eaten something, and given Leonora time to put two of the least mended sheets on the bed...

The engineer Cerello Mercuri, from a noble Greek family, was not only a successful builder, but also a fine art connoisseur, cap-

able of spending fabulous sums of money on the purchase of paintings, statues, antique furniture and heirlooms.

And while he dined, the omelette prepared by Leonora was excellent! The wine served by Silvestro was extraordinary! He questioned him to see if there was anything worthy of note in the castle. The miserable state of the building did not give him much



hope, however... And indeed, Sylvester replied that there was a painting, some furniture of fine workmanship, albeit very worn, and that he had stored all this in the basement, safe from the collapses that threatened one wing of the castle and the ravages of the weather.

Cerello did not rest until Silvestro and Leonora guided him to that basement, and there, by the light of a bright candelabra, imagine his amazement when he revealed that the painting was a work by Tintoretto, a work that was famous because it had been assessed by a famous critic a hundred years earlier, but never found.

And because he was a gentleman, the engineer immediately said: "My dear man, do you know that this piece is worth a

few millions?" "A few millions?" stammered Sylvester as if dreamily.

"Precisely... and if you give me your master's address, I will go and look for him in town tomorrow, and you can be sure that I will not skimp on the price to secure this masterpiece...."

* * *

So it was that two days later Marco Santa-Croce received a cheque from the engineer Cerello Mercuri for the sum of three million euro, which allowed him to rebuild the castle and caused him to stammer his father's words: "Perhaps a benign star will shine again for our name...".

Yes, the benign star had lit up the sky, and the Santa-Croce family was once again living as their forebears and their ancient tradition had intended. □

FIORETTI OF DON BOSCO - 50

by Michele Molineris
(Continued from February 2023)

I remember that one day he asked me to listen to the lesson he was supposed to recite in school and, taking one of his Latin books out of his pocket, he began to sing it on the *cum Sancto Spiritu* aria from Rossini's Mass.

I was amazed at his way of reciting the lesson, and he said to me: "You see, I have little memory and to learn I must always study by singing. When I have learnt, then I recite, but always keeping the aria in mind to remember the words.

At that moment we heard our companions shouting: "Long live

Don Bosco!"

Baldomero invited me to go and kiss Don Bosco's hand. Don Bosco came towards us, surrounded and pressed in the midst of a large crowd of young people. He was smiling and had a word for each one. His hands held many other hands together, that is, the hands of the youngsters who surrounded him; and as he held them tight he would say now to one and now to another: "Run!"

And the answer was always the same: "I can't because you're holding me!"

The two of us approached him and he greeted us with a smiling glance. Baldomero kissed his right hand and I kissed Don Bosco's left, and our fingers found themselves mixed up with the

other fingers, between Don Bosco's hands.

I remember that I found myself pressed between my companions, far from Don Bosco's hand by the whole length of my arm, yet my finger was clasped in Don Bosco's hand and I walked backwards with my gaze fixed on him, with many other young men surrounding him in a playful and reverent act.

Recreation time was over and Don Bosco, having reached the foot of the stairs, dismissed the other youngsters one by one and kept only the two of us. In this way, we climbed the stairs leading to his little room rather uncomfortably. When he reached the balcony, Don Bosco nodded to the youngsters who had resumed cheering him on, then said to me: "You go down and into the courtyard."

I kissed his hand and went down without a word. I felt a little envy in my heart for Baldomero who had been detained and I decided to wait for him at the bottom of the stairs, to find out what had passed between him and Don Bosco. When he came down he was gloating with joy, holding an image of Our Lady between his fingers. Unfortunately, he had been waiting a long time and the school bell only allowed me to ask him: "What did Don Bosco tell you?"

"He gave me this picture."

"And it took that long to give you a picture?"

He also heard my confession."

"He did?"

"And told me all my sins."

"What!?... He never told me!"

"How glad I am. Enough, let's

go to school."

Then Don Bosco left for Rome. Baldomero, who had been very well up to that day, went up to the infirmary, leaving me the keys to the musical scores. The next morning, as we were about to leave the study hall and go down to the church for Mass, the catechist came into the study hall and in a voice broken with emotion announced to us that Baldomero had just expired and that we should therefore remember him in our prayers.

The effect of those words was so great on everyone, but especially on me, that I could not help but relate them to those said by Don Bosco the previous year: "Eight of you must die in 1877 and then others still and some of these begin with the letter B. I remained with the certainty that Don Bosco, enlightened by the Lord about Baldomero's imminent death, had wanted to prepare him for the great step with paternal charity and lively zeal (from *Boll. Sal., clic.* 1916, 357).

228. And this is a saint? (1877)

Mme Beaulieu, who had known the holy Curé d'Ars, believed she had gained an accurate idea of what a saint he was at the sight of him.

When Don Bosco arrived in Nice, the lady, having heard that a saint had arrived, whose name she knew by reputation, wished to make his personal acquaintance. Knowing this desire, a friend of hers took her to a house of acquaintances during lunchtime. Don Bosco sat at the head of the table and the lady sat at the back with her friend. The ever se-

rene servant of God held up his glass and toasted the host. The newcomer was almost scandalised. "And this is a saint?" she thought to herself, disappointed in her expectation.

Having cleared the table, she presented herself to Don Bosco, lavishing compliments on him; but Don Bosco smilingly told her: "Whether you eat or drink, do everything in the name of the Lord."

The good woman understood, and it took no more than that for her to reconsider. She soon became a Salesian Cooperator and had been so for three years when she told Fr Albera about it, which she had already repeated to many others (*M.B., XIII, 127*).

229. The steamer will arrive twelve days late (1877)

Don Bosco, who arrived in Alassio on 6 July 1877 to bid farewell to the missionaries of the third expedition, seemed undecided whether or not he should accompany Monsignor Aneyros to Nice and Marseilles, from whose port she would sail to America; however, deep down he was sorry to say goodbye to him and leave him alone, before embarking. So, he did not leave his side until he and his priests embarked on the 17th on the *Poitou*: there on the ship he bade him farewell.

Those Americans were full of joy; the thought of the fatherland made them rejoice and they calculated the number of days it would still take to see her again. The saint listened and kept silent; finally, smiling, he told them that

the calculations they had made did not add up. Then, with his usual calmness, he urged them not to be in such a hurry, but rather to arm themselves with holy patience: they would all arrive in Buenos Aires safe and sound, but on such a day... And he specified the date, which was twelve days longer than the time normally taken by steamships in the crossing from Marseilles to the capital of Argentina.

"This is impossible!" they exclaimed in one voice with a sense of dread. "Our journey cannot last that long!"

Yet Don Bosco had spoken the truth. Their ship struggled with the storm all the way to Cape Verde, until it had to drop anchor at St Vincent's Island because of the damage it had suffered, and there they waited for some ship to pass, on which they could tranship passengers and goods so they could continue. When they landed in Buenos Aires, it was the Friday after the octave of the Assumption, 24 August, the day predicted by Don Bosco (*M.B., XIII, 156*).

230. The Burial of the Blackbird (1877)

I was a pupil at the S. Philip Neri boarding school in Lanzo in the school years 1876-79, Fr Scapini being prefect and then director.

Although I was a young boy at the time, the dear and revered likeness of our father Don Bosco, whom I saw in Lanzo many times, is etched on my mind.

He showed me a particular liking for the fact that I was a very energetic boy, let's say, and re-

cognised as the ringleader of my peers. I remember a characteristic episode. During a school walk in the Lanzo hills, accompanied by an assistant who, if I am not mistaken, was called Don Scita, we discovered a brood of blackbirds, which we took to the boarding school and placed in a hidden box in the dormitory.

As it was bound to happen, given the frequent visits and the related forced gorging of the little beasts, they succumbed in a short time.

When the last blackbird died, it was decided to bury it in a corner of the courtyard and to give the ceremony a particularly solemn character. Good Givone, the sacristan (I remember perfectly) was kept at bay by the conspirators and we managed to break into the sacristy and seize everything needed for the burial. So the poor blackbird had a solemn funeral, with liturgical singing and sprinkling and even a final speech.

Don Bosco, a guest in those days at the college, saw the whole scene from the back. When the ceremony was over, he had me summoned to his study, as the one in charge of the brickyard. With a stern frown he made me understand that we had done a bad thing, a real desecration, which must not be repeated. However, seeing that we had prepared and done everything properly, he forgave me and the whole sacrilegious gang and dismissed me with a large packet of sweets to distribute to the accomplices (*Giov. Gianotti in "Numero unico di Lanzo", 1929*).

231. The coachman (1877)

One day in Rome, Don Bosco, having taken a carriage because of bad weather, when he arrived at the end of the trip, wanted to give the coachman, who was all wet from the rain, a tip. Not even on purpose, he found nothing in his pocket but the fare. But wanting to show the poor man his dis-pleasure, he told him that he would pray for him since he could do nothing else.

"Pray for me? but this is a big one: no one has ever had such a talk with me."

"I cannot believe it."

"Yet it is true. Is this prayer such a precious thing, then?"

"Prayer is the greatest treasure in the world," Don Bosco replied to him, who, seeing the coachman smiling with an air of doubt, continued: "Tell me something, friend, how long has it been since your last confession?"

"Me? I don't know; in fact I don't even remember if I ever did."

Then at the end of your day come and see me at such and such a street, such and such a number; I will listen to you and be sure you will be well."

In the evening of that same day, Don Bosco was already in his room, or rather in bed, when the coachman arrived to ask for him.

"But it's too late," they told him; "the priest is already asleep at this hour."

The coachman insisted and said that the priest was waiting for him. They then went to announce the visit to the saint and he got up in a hurry, dismissed the newcomer and, embracing him tenderly, sent him off as happy as a clam (*D'Espiney, Don Bosco, 237*). □



A PROJECT OF LIFE, INSPIRED BY MARY PART TWO

by Enrico dal Covolo

II. DISCIPLE OF THE LORD

Martha and Mary, sisters of Lazarus, are well known to both Luke and John. In the Fourth Gospel they appear in the two accounts of the resurrection of Lazarus and the anointing at Bethany, which immediately preceded the triumphal entry into Jerusalem and the passion week.

But this time we will deal rather with the Gospel of Luke, where it speaks of Mary who, "sitting at the feet of Jesus, listened to his word" (10:39); and by using the spiritual practice of *lectio divina* on this passage, we will try to illustrate a characteristic trait that Mary of Bethany and Mary of Nazareth, the mother of Jesus, have in common.

1. Reading (Luke 10,3842)

"While on the road with his disciples, Jesus entered a village and a woman, whose name was Martha, welcomed him into her house. She had a sister named

Mary, who sat at Jesus' feet and listened to his word.

Martha, on the other hand, was engrossed in many duties. Then, coming forward, she said: "Lord, do you not see that my sister has left me alone to serve? Tell her to help me!" But the Lord answered her: "Martha, Martha, you fret and



worry over many things, but only one thing is needed.

"Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

2. Meditation

Let us consider some elements of the story: first of all its context (what comes before and what comes after), then the structure of the scene (how it is constructed) and finally the characters (who they are) and their words (what they say).

a) The passage is placed between two teachings of Jesus, one concerning love of neighbour, the other concerning prayer.

Jesus has just finished narrating the parable of the Good Samaritan to the rabbi who had asked him, "Teacher, who is my neighbour?" "Neighbour," Jesus replies, "is he who draws near to the needy, just like that Samaritan: and now go," the Master concludes, "you too should behave in the same way." A little later, it is the disciples themselves who ask another question: "Master," one of them asks him, "teach us to pray! John also did it with his disciples." And Jesus carries out a veritable catechesis on prayer, as he gives the disciples the "Our Father" prayer.

The passage of Martha and Mary lies right in the middle, without any link: thus, it functions somewhat "as a hinge" between a teaching on charity and a teaching on prayer. In a way, the episode rises to the level of a "symbol", an acronym that illustrates the indispensable condition



to guarantee the disciple's balance between the two poles of Christian experience: precisely contemplation and action, the experience of God and the practical testimony of charity.

It follows that the **indispensable clause for linking prayer and life is listening to the word of Jesus**: in the conclusion of the passage, in fact, it is precisely listening that is extolled as "the best part", and figures as the distinguishing feature of the disciple who "sits at the feet" of his master.

b) To the same conclusion also leads the overall observation of the scene, characterised by a dramatic "double summit": the moment of maximum tension and the moment of the final solution.

The moment of maximum tension in the drama explodes in Martha's nervous outburst, which goes so far as to openly reproach Jesus. The moment of the drama's resolution consists in the Master's concluding words, which take on the air of a solemn promise: "Mary", says Jesus, "has chosen the better part, which will never be taken away from her."

It is evident that the whole scene rests on this conclusion, and herein lies the teaching of the passage: the 'best part' is to listen to the word of Jesus, and from here the scale of values must start. Getting this scale wrong means plunging into the abyss of non-sense: the "boomerang" is triggered, and man's values - disconnected from God's plan - turn against man himself, becoming disvalues, false absolutes, death traps.

c) The characters in the play, apart from Jesus, are Martha and Mary. For the Fathers of the Church, the consideration of women is a courageous choice against the current.

All the more so because the two women are well characterised: each one embodies a different and complementary attitude to the other. Martha is intent on the



Only one thing is necessary: Mary has chosen the better part.

practicalities of daily life, Mary on the other hand is absorbed in meditation and spiritual care.

The words concerning Mary, in fact, describe her as one who, 'sitting at the feet of Jesus, listened to his word'. "Sitting at someone's feet" is a catch-phrase to indicate the disciple's relationship with his teacher: for example, Paul, in saying that he had been a disciple of the famous rabbi Gamaliel, recalls that "as a young man in Jerusalem he sat at his feet" (Acts 22:3). Thus, Mary of Bethany - like Mary of Nazareth - personifies the icon of the faithful disciple.

The words referring to Martha are of two kinds. There is a positive word, a title of merit implicit in the fact that Martha exercises many services - or rather, a veritable *diakonia* - towards Jesus and the disciples. But there are also words that cannot go without reproach, because Martha is "all caught up", "agitated", "worried": she is "tossed to and fro", like the waves of a stormy sea. It turns out that her service, meritorious in itself, takes her too far: so, Martha becomes rude to Jesus, even as she is doing so much for him.

But the Lord's calm word clearly fixes the antidote to Martha's agitation. This antidote is listening to the Word, defined as "the best part." There is therefore a primacy to be conserved at all costs, which is that of listening, on pain of meaninglessness and the degeneration of action. □



MISSION MONGOLIA

Paul Hoon Kang, sdb

On 25 September, the solemn and evocative rite of sending out the departing members of the Salesian Missionary Expedition was repeated for the 153rd time. The young Korean Paul Hoon Kang was designated to the Salesian presence in Mongolia.

What made you write your statement of readiness for the missions?

The aspiration to come closer to Jesus Christ by following the way of Don Bosco. In other words, it is the desire to have a profound experience of God in the midst of the lives and cultures of poor young people, in missions, as a son of Don Bosco.

How did the people close to you take your missionary choice?

When I told them of my dream of a missionary vocation, naturally my family and many brothers were saddened by my departure and worried about me. However, after seeing my discernment and listening to my vocational journey, most of them promised me their

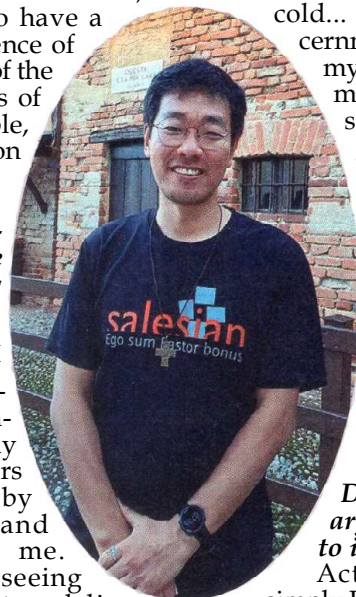
prayers and support. Once again, I thank my parents, family and dear brothers for accepting this decision.

You are about to be sent to Mongolia: are you happy with this destination? Do you have any doubts or fears about the new reality? Do you feel ready to face the challenges of a new culture, to learn a new language?

Honestly, when I first heard the news that I would be sent to Mongolia I was a little confused, because I am sensitive to the cold... But after deep discernment, in prayer, with my spiritual guide and my Superiors, I realised that this is the great gift God has prepared for me. And then the desire to go to Mongolia and meet young Mongolians emerged strongly. Now I am happy and full of gratitude, excitement and joy in view of my missionary journey.

Do you have missionary models you want to imitate?

Actually, for me it is simply Don Bosco who is my model of a Salesian missionary. He left the rural reality of 'Becchi' and



experienced the fullness of his vocation among young people from different backgrounds and cultures in the industrial city of Turin. That's how I would like to live.

I want to live the Salesian vocation more fully in itself, rather than seeking some view of the missionary life. I want to find Christ through the eyes of Don Bosco in those I meet on the mission field. I want to meet them with the heart of Don Bosco and become like the Good Shepherd Jesus Christ.

What message would you send to young people about the missionary vocation?

Become a Salesian of Don Bosco, if you want to have a pleasant encounter with God in your daily life.

Become a Salesian of Don Bos-

(Continued from pg. 11)

Salesian missionaries help me solve them: they are kind and welcoming. I always feel supported by them.

I am currently studying automotive mechanics, but this does not necessarily mean that I will be repairing cars in the future. This course trains me in work discipline and self-management, as well as providing me with technical skills for my future life. I also dream of owning a car. I will have the skills to repair it myself! I want to study at university: at the moment I am deciding whether to enrol in a



co, if you want to live with the living Jesus among poor young people. Become a Salesian missionary if you want to encounter and experience God even more deeply.

Become a Salesian missionary if you want to discover and encounter Christ every day through the eyes of Don Bosco.

I promise you that this Salesian missionary vocation will be the greatest gift from God that you may ever receive. □

degree course in tourism management or to deepen my knowledge of automotive mechanics with engineering. I would like to thank the Salesians for their support over all these years, and I know that many people also need help. I thank them for the many opportunities I have had and which I am sure I will still have. □

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

“Collect Call”

My mother was away all weekend at a business conference. During a break, she decided to call home ‘collect.’ My six-year-old brother picked up the phone and heard a stranger’s voice say, “We have a Betty on the line. Will you accept the charges?” Frantic, he dropped the receiver and came charging outside screaming, “Dad! They’ve got Mom! And they want money!”

What Don’t You Have?

An elderly man went to the doctor for a visit. “Doc,” he says, “I am so stricken. I have chest pains, headaches, back pains, nausea, arthritis, constipation, stomach cramps, earaches, burning in the eyes, congested lungs...” “Sir,” says the doctor, “you complain you have so many things. What don’t you have?” The man answers, “Teeth.”

Lobster Pets

After a day fishing in the ocean a fisherman is walking from the pier carrying two lobsters in a bucket. He is approached by the Game Warden who asks him for his fishing license. The fisherman says to the warden, “I did not catch these lobsters, they are my pets. Everyday I come down to the water and whistle and these lobsters jump out and I take them for a walk only to return them at the end of the day. The warden, not believing him, reminds him that it is illegal to

fish without a license. The fisherman turns to the warden and says, “If you don’t believe me then watch,” as he throws the lobsters back into the water. The warden says, “Now whistle to your lobsters and show me that they will come out of the water.” The fisherman turns to the warden and says: “What lobsters?”

Lost in Bookstore

A friend and her young son Reid, were browsing in a large bookstore. Engrossed in making a selection, my friend had lost sight of her son. “Reid!” she called out, racing through the aisles. “Reid!” Just as she spotted the boy she bumped into another customer. “Pardon me, ma’am,” she said, “but most folks come here because they already like to read. No sense in wasting your time trying to convince them.”

Another Try

Office Boy: “Please sir, could I have tomorrow afternoon off?” Boss: “Ah, yes, that same old excuse about your grandmother, I suppose.” Office Boy: “Exactly, sir, she’s making her first parachute jump.”

All in the Family

John: “What made you oversleep this morning?” James: “There are seven of us in the house and the alarm was only set for six. □

A SIX LETTER WORD THAT WORKS MIRACLES

Carmen Laval

There is a new type of cure. Its effectiveness against many diseases is impressive. It has no side effects... except to make you happier. But it will take years before it is prescribed by official medicine. Because it has one huge flaw: it doesn't make anyone any money!

This simple and free remedy consists simply in saying one six-letter word often: thank you.

The science is clear. Countless scientific studies prove the extraordinary effectiveness of gratitude. It is not money or success that makes life fulfilling and meaningful: what nourishes us and makes us truly happy is the quality of human relationships. Warm and caring relationships give us a deep sense of well-being. Who does not like to be appreciated and celebrated? Because that is what gratitude is all about: celebrating the people in



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our lives who make us happy and support us. But it is on health that the impact of gratitude is most striking. Gratitude even cures heart disease. It has beneficial effects on sleep, anxiety or depression. Gratitude even heals the heart.

It all started with happiness: God created Paradise as the beginning and end of human life. One does not need to study in a white coat to realise that gratitude is a wonderful feeling, which deserves to be cultivated. And one only has to look around to see that grateful people are generally more satisfied than ungrateful ones.

5 ways to cultivate gratitude Keeping a gratitude diary

This is a simple and easy first step in your gratitude journey. Simply write down three things you feel grateful for and the emotions they have brought you. Studies have shown that keeping a daily gratitude diary for a relatively short period of 2 to 3 weeks increases your sense of well-being.

Learning to share more

Expressing positive emotions such as gratitude, tenderness or humour strengthens relationships. Strong relationships invite even more sharing, nurturing even stronger bonds. In 2015, London psychologists showed that people who were asked to feel a little gratitude every day had better sleep and lower blood

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Don Bosco's Madonna

pressure after two weeks than a comparable group. Expressing gratitude to husband, wife, children even for the little things in life is a simple way to enrich the bond between people who love each other.

Writing Letters of Gratitude

When was the last time you received a handwritten postcard or letter? In the age of email and texting, taking the time to write by hand will really make a difference. Research has shown that writing a thank you letter to someone who has helped us is as good for the recipient as it is for the sender. In fact, the act of writing helps to validate the experience and relive the positive emotions associated with it. It need not be long. A simple 'Thank you for your attention, it meant a lot to me' can have a great impact on oneself and others.

Trying visits of gratitude

Writing down your gratitude is all very well, but expressing it in person is even better! Say what made you happy, touched you and helped you in the other person's attitude towards you. Although this is the hardest thing for some to do, it has been proven to be effective. Showing vulnerability in front of others is a sign of sincerity and your gesture will be even more appreciated for it. It was the practice that brought the most joy and happiness to the study participants. This happiness is also due to the mutual tenderness expressed through physical gestures, such as hugging.

Creating rituals of gratitude

By creating 'moments of gratitude' in your day, for example during your morning coffee or when you go to bed at night, you

will increase your sense of well-being. Try giving thanks for the things you take for granted. For example, getting out of bed in the morning is taken for granted for most of us. However, some sick people are unable to do so. Thank life for your good health and you will see that your general condition will improve.

It's not just any feeling

Gratitude is valuable because it leads us to recognise that there is good in our existence. Life is never perfect and is sometimes cruel. But there are always joys, moments worth experiencing. Gratitude invites us to celebrate these moments, to recognise what goes right in our lives rather than dwelling on what goes wrong, to focus on the positive rather than the negative.

Gratitude also helps block toxic emotions such as envy and resentment. Instead of envying those who have more, gratitude makes us appreciate what we have. On a deeper level, gratitude takes us away from ourselves and opens us up to others. We recognise that we owe others at least some of the blessings that come our way.

This change affects all of us, every day: running water, heating, the ability to eat three times a day, all of this represents an extraordinary comfort compared to what humanity has experienced for millennia. Perhaps that is why it seems more difficult for people in developed countries to feel gratitude. It is so easy to say 'thank you'!

I will start: thank you for reading my article all the way through. I am very grateful for your attention. □

March 2024

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Don Bosco's Madonna

THE DEATH OF THE PARISH

A strange funeral announcement appeared on walls of the town and the town's newspaper: 'With deep sorrow we announce the death of St Euphrosia Parish. The funeral will take place on Sunday at 11 a.m.'

On Sunday, of course, St Euphrosia's church was as crowded as ever. There was not a single free seat left, not even standing room. In front of the altar was the catafalque with a dark wooden coffin. The parish priest delivered a simple sermon:

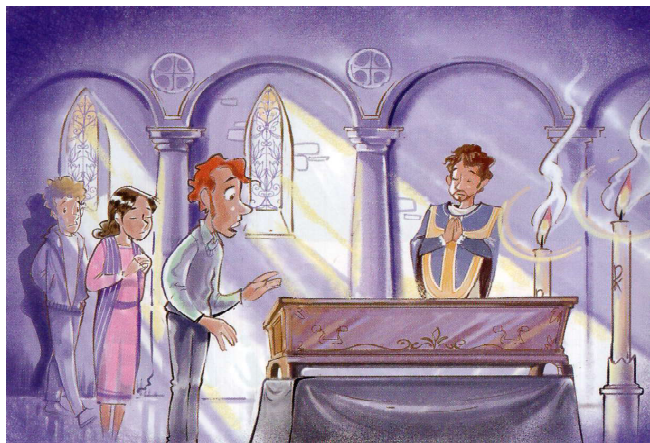
"I do not believe that our parish can be revived and resurrected, but since we are almost all here, I want to make a last attempt. I would like you all to pass by the coffin, to take a last look at the deceased. You will march in single file, one at a time, and after looking at the deceased you will exit through the sacristy door. Afterwards, those who wish may return through the door for Mass."

The parish priest opened the casket. Everyone wondered: "Who could be inside? Who really is the dead man?"

They began to walk slowly past. Everyone faced the coffin and looked inside, then left the church.

They all came out quietly, a little confused.

Because everyone from the parish of St Euphrosia who wanted to see the corpse and looked into the coffin, saw, in a mirror resting on the bottom of the coffin, their own face. □



If there is dust in the halls of your parish,
there is dust on your soul.

*"You also, like living stones,
form the temple of the Holy Spirit, you are priests
consecrated to God and you offer spiritual sacrifices that God willingly
accepts, through Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:5)*

LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

I had lumps in my armpits but I prayed the Three Hail Marys throughout the month of October for their dissolution and by God's grace and in His powerful name they dissolved. I remember from my childhood days, I would always read the testimonies and "In a Cheerful Mood" in your magazine.

Nancy.N

Our heartfelt gratitude to Jesus, Mary and St. Peregrine for the many favours received.

Mrs. B. Rosario

Sincere thanks to Mother Mary, Don Bosco, Dominic Savio and all the Saints for all the favours received and for saving us from accidents.

A Devotee

Thank you dear Mother Mary for saving my godchild from a severe fall and thank you for keeping my brother safe from a severe attack of kidney stones.

A Devotee

My delayed but heartfelt thanks to Our Lord Jesus and Mother Mary Help of Christians for giving my daughter a job and for many other blessings.

Mrs S.C. Netto, Chennai

My grateful thanks to Jesus, Mary Help of Christians, St. John Bosco and St Dominic Savio for blessing my son and daughter-in-law with a healthy baby boy after 5^{1/2} years of marriage and the faithful recitation of the Three Hail Marys. Mama Mary please continue to bless and protect our family.

S. Aranjo, Mumbai

Our sincere thanks to Our Lord, Mary Help of Christians and St. Jude healing me of my illness and for all the graces received.

A Devotee

Our heartfelt gratitude to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Mother Mary, St. Anthony, St. Jude and St. John Bosco for all the favours received. Please continue to bless us.

Glenn D'Souza, Mumbai

My grateful thanks to Jesus and Mama Mary for blessing my daughter with a baby boy after the loss of her first child and two miscarriages/ The boy is now five years old. I regret the delay.

M. Rodrigues

POPE'S WORLDWIDE PRAYER NETWORK

MARCH 2024

For New Martyrs

Let us pray that those who risk their lives for the Gospel in various parts of the world might imbue the Church with their courage and missionary drive.

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MARY WAS THERE

We are grateful to Our Lady for making the High Court of Goa quash a false criminal charge foisted upon me by a politician in collusion with a police official and a senior Inspector to protect a corrupt Sarpanch who instigated migrants to assault me and after assaulting me brutally at Salvador Do Mundo the politician wanted me to withdraw the FIR I had filed, to help him save his political career. My prayers to Our Lady culminated in the court quashing the criminal case.

Dr. Olav Albuquerque, Mumbai

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

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

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