

CONTENTS

From The Editor's Desk:
Muddying the Waters.....3

The Bold Dance of Imperfect Spouses
- *Gianpaolo Dianin*.....4

The Risen Jesus Keeps his Wounds
- *Carlo Biscontin*.....7

The Disasters of Doubters
- *Anastasia Dias*.....9

Don Bosco in the Land of White Nights
- *Katrina Bachrata*.....11

Witnesses In And For Our Times:
St. Michael de Sanctis
- *Ian Pinto, sdb*.....13

Lectio Divina: the Peace of Pardon
and Reconciliation
- *Carlo Broccardo*.....16

Quietspaces: The Tangibility and
Simplicity of the SmallTime
- *Pope Francis*.....18

Beautiful, Hopeful Sisters
- *Pierluigi Menato*.....20

Fioretti of Don Bosco - 27
- *Michele Molineris*24

Reflecting on Mary: Mary and the
Birth of the Church
- *Card. A. Ballestrero*.....28

Vocation Story: Me and My Father's
Prayers
Fr. Shaun D'Lima, sdb.....30

In A Cheerful Mood.....32

The Three Hail Marys.....33

Loving Children to their
Loving Mother.....34



***O God,
who have been pleased
to gladden the world
by the Resurrection
of your Son
our Lord Jesus Christ,
grant, we pray,
that through his Mother,
the Virgin Mary,
we may receive
the joys
of everlasting life.***

*(From the Common of Our Lady
for Easter)*

From The Editor's Desk

MUDDYING THE WATERS

Driving into the city as I have to, one of the sights that shocks and Drepels me are the heaps of garbage that keep piling up and tipping themselves into nearby streams of effluents that the neighbouring industries disgorge. I believe like the farmer in the gospel of Matthew (13:24-30) I can say: 'Some enemy has done this.' That is what got me thinking.

'Some enemy has done this,' the farmer says upon discovering the weeds among his wheat. Had he not sown good seed? So where did the weeds come from? 'I'll cut them down,' he says. A friend advises patience until the harvest day - and he listens.

The Lord too might say: 'Some enemy has done this,' as he looks down on creation. Who has poisoned the well or muddied the waters? Fish no longer spawn in the oily waters of the Arabian Sea (or any other water body for that matter), while plastic bottles drift up to the shoreline. Our waste mounts defining our 'discard society.' We casually toss wrappers into our bins which are then discarded into the landfills that I see as I enter or leave the city. Natural beauty is covered in urban concrete. The resources of the world are limited and we are fast draining the pool of its life. I believe we are already beginning to see the bottom.

'Some enemy has done this,' God would say as he calls out for someone to respond to his constant searching: 'Adam, where are you?' (Gen.3:9) But Adam is confused now, no longer confident of his Master's love. 'I was naked, so I hid,' he replies. 'Who told you that you were naked?' Blame others for one's own mistakes and sins. And he does. Isn't that what you and I do when it comes to the heaps of garbage, dripping taps and blinding lights that need not be left on?

'Some enemy has done this.' Did Jesus not once call him *the Father of lies*? How easily we fall prey to his daily spin. I follow the Lord, but I let some illness or upset rock my faith. I am Christian, yet I listen more to what people say. I am a son or daughter of the Father, and the words of Jesus should nourish my faith and sustain me in these dark times that inevitably come my way, but sometimes I live like *I know not the Man* and prefer the pieces of silver that the world offers.

Yet this line comes to me: 'each morning he wakes me to hear, to listen like a disciple' (Is.50:4). Nature renews itself each day, unaware of the sins of us humans and the murders and hatred of another day. Nature believes that fish will leap again on that tired stream flowing through the slum and the lakes will sparkle with clean water as little children splash around in them. And God too has patience to believe that man can be redeemed and that all will be well at harvest time.

Gerard Manley Hopkins, the great Jesuit poet, expressed this possibility of renewal well in his poem, *God's Grandeur*.

*And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things...
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent world
Broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.*

Fr. Ian Doulton, sdb

THE BOLD DANCE OF IMPERFECT SPOUSES

by Gianpaolo Dianin

It is said that perfection is not of this world, and this is also true for relationships in general, and for couples in particular. Adolescents and young people, even if they deny it in words, they actually dream of meeting their fairy tale "Prince or Princess Charming." These dreams are understandable because they are compatible with the magic of falling in love. But then marriage delivers to the two of them, real life, history, everyday life and this has its beauties, but also its hardships. Sooner or later, we come up against the experience of imperfection and fragility that

are part of our human condition.

We can distinguish various types of fragility. There is, first of all, a natural limitation that leads us to recognize ourselves as human beings who are born and die, grow and age, have certain abilities and limitations of various kinds. This limit, reread in Christian terms, recalls our condition as creatures that we all find difficult to embrace; this is what happened to Adam and Eve, who perceived the limitations as a chain to be broken. This is what happens today when boundaries clash with the will to power that science and techno-



logy highlight, leading man to continually seek to overstep every boundary.

Finally, we recognize a greater, more existential fragility that bears the name of guilt, at the anthropological level, and sin at the religious level. Sin, in particular, is a characteristic experience of the human being, endowed with freedom, before God; man has the possibility of choosing by following the good or by infringing its demands.

Thinking about the experience of a couple, we can apply the same trilogy to love, which first of all has to deal with a natural limit, because becoming one flesh remains a utopia, the horizon of the couple's entire existence is never fully reached. We also recognize a creaturely fragility because God is love and we are eternal apprentices of love, continually stretched between that gift of self, which represents the maturity of love, and our substantial selfishness that would like the other to be made to our own measure. The couple also has to deal with existential fragility because love is too often wounded by human freedom which, in the case of love, can reach even dramatic forms of violence towards the other.

If the experience of love brings man closer to the God who is Love in whom he believes, it highlights, in an equally real way, the limitation and fragility of human love. If man is created in the image of the God who is Love, it is equally true that the history and the stories of so many couples, we could say of all couples, is the concrete recognition that the dialectic between

similarity and dissimilarity remains insoluble along the path of every experience of human love. Sometimes an impossible love is asked of the partner, in the sense that attitudes and behaviours are demanded of the relationship that only God would be allowed to ask.

Pope Francis opens his reflections on the first years of marriage with a healthy realism that does not kill dreams, but opens a slow and gradual path, making their life a period of their patient realization (AL, 218-219). He states, "Marriage is not something that happens once for all. Their union is real [...] the spouses assume an active and creative role in a lifelong project. Their gaze now has to be directed to the future that, with the help of God's grace, they are daily called to build." The Pope goes on to recall that each must set aside all illusions and accept the other as he or she actually is: an unfinished product. [...] The couple then must "work day by day, with God's grace and "without expecting the spouse to be perfect." "We must put aside illusions and accept him or her as s/he is: unfinished, called to grow, a work in progress."

To those who follow young married couples, the Pope says that "it is necessary to present this with realistic clarity from the very beginning." And newlyweds are asked not to cultivate an "inquisitive and implacable gaze, checking merits, rights, claims, self-defence." Building a project together asks for patience, understanding, tolerance, generosity, mutual support. Marriage is not something concluded. You

take on the other person in your life indefinitely for a lifelong work that does not include retirement. Marriage is like a dance and sometimes has the traits of ice skaters: "Young love needs to keep dancing toward the future with immense hope [...] the very excitement that should be its propelling force" (AL 219).

The virtue that must sustain the couple is hope. Charles Péguy wrote that hope is that virtue which rises each morning to build each day. And the Pope writes: "Hope is that which has in itself the power of yeast, that which makes us look beyond contra-

dictions, conflicts, contingencies, that which always makes us look beyond. To see beyond is a very precise indication: beyond that defect, beyond that limit, beyond that imperfection. Recognizing that you are more than that limit and that "more" allows me to welcome the imperfection that is not just the other person's but mine too.

Marriage is the union of two imperfect people whom the Lord has placed next to each other so that they can support each other and take care of their imperfection. □

THE CORNFIELD

by Erik Duke

There was a farmer who grew excellent quality corn. Every year he won the prize for the best corn grown.

One year a reporter interviewed him and learned something interesting about how he grew it. The reporter found out that the farmer shared the seeds of his corn with his neighbours.

"How can you afford to share your best corn seeds with your neighbours when they compete with your corn every year?" asked the reporter.

"Why, sir," asked the farmer, "didn't you know that? The wind picks up pollen from maturing corn and swirls it from field to field. If my neighbours grow inferior corn, cross-pollination will constantly degrade the quality of my corn. If I want to grow good corn, I need to help my neighbours grow good corn."

So it is with our lives....

Those who want to live well and meaningfully must help enrich the lives of others, because the value of a life is measured by the lives it touches.

And he who chooses to be happy must help others find happiness, because the well-being of each is tied to the well-being of all....

Call it the "power of the collective," call it the "principle of success," call it the "law of life." The fact is, none of us really wins until we all win!



THE RISEN JESUS KEEPS HIS WOUND

Chino Biscontin

With the edict of Constantine issued in Milan in 313, which put an end to the persecutions, Christians could freely and publicly express their faith with celebrations. With the constructions of sacred edifices promoted by the emperor's mother, Saint Helen, in the Holy Land in the places of Jesus' memory, these celebrations acquired structure and solemnity. In particular, already in the course of the IV century, on the Sunday before Easter, the faithful gathered on the Mount of Olives for a celebration followed by a procession commemorating Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.

In the VI century the procession stopped at the shrine of the Ascension, at Gethsemane, at the pool of Bethesda, at the Basilica of the Resurrection and ended at the rock of Calvary. The patriarch travelled the route on the back of a donkey.

From the East this procession passed to the West, first to Spain and France. In Rome, on the other hand, the Sunday before Easter was dedicated to reading the stories of the Lord's Passion. But even in Rome, certainly in the eleventh century, the procession was introduced, preceded by the blessing of olive branches and presided over by the Pope.

Our celebration of Palm Sunday, following the reform of the Second Vatican Council, combines both elements: the procession with olive branches and the reading of the account of

the Lord's Passion. In this way we commemorate Jesus' messianic entry into Jerusalem, but with the awareness that we are welcoming the risen Lord, who has promised to be present when we gather in his name. The Passion reading, then, serves to introduce the days of Holy Week, which culminate in the Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday.

At Mass, after the first reading from Isaiah, we pray with the dramatic Psalm 21 and repeat the heartrending cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken



me?" These are the words and it is the psalm that Jesus prayed while nailed to the cross. And it invites us to consider the immense suffering of the Lord Jesus, which cannot fail to move those who worship and love him.

His suffering testifies to how tremendously destructive is the enormous accumulation of sins that pollutes human history. The most beautiful person among those born of women, who possessed immense gifts of wisdom and knew how to bestow them on the simple, who believed in the possibility of total goodness to men and demonstrated it with his boundless generosity, this man was assassinated when he was still in the prime of life! And there is an overflowing accumulation of overbearing pride, of the will to dominate, of attachment to privilege, of pettiness, of closure to God and to human compassion, of corruption and lies, of all the dark wickedness of all humanity.

But this suffering also reveals a heroic, intrepid love, of an

unconditional generosity, of an unshakable trust in God the Father, of a fidelity to a mission that had to do with the healing and salvation of humanity. From the cross, tortured by excruciating suffering, he prayed for those who were killing him and filling his last throbs with insults, he entrusted his mother, Mary, to the disciple he loved, asking him to treat her as a mother, and he entrusted his disciple to his mother, asking her to love him as a son, he, the disciple who represented the small group of disciples to whom, Jesus firmly believed, the Father would hand over the mission to continue his work: to announce and bear witness to the Gospel.

We cannot but respond to this love with all the love of which we are capable, aware that it is not just a matter of remembering a love of the past, but a love that is very present in the risen Jesus and, in the celebration of the Eucharist, addressed to each one of us. This is why the Risen One retains the wound that opened his heart. □

THE EASTER TRIDUUM

The Easter Triduum, or Sacred Triduum, is meant to celebrate the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord. It is a celebration around the Risen Lord, alive and present. It is the relationship with the Lord Jesus that makes us Christians.

With sunset of **Holy Thursday**, Lent ends, and the evening Holy Mass is a memorial of the Lord's Supper. The rite of the washing of the feet reminds us that the Master and Lord revealed his divine beauty in boundless goodness, which made him our servant.

Good Friday commemorates the events of the Passion and death of Jesus at the very hour that saw them take place. There is no celebration of the Mass, but the Body of the Lord is given, that the love witnessed by the Gospel story is now addressed to us by Jesus in person.

Holy Saturday, which commemorates Jesus in the tomb, is a day of silence and intimate prayer and does not include assemblies.

The Sacred Triduum culminates with the most solemn of all the celebrations of the liturgical year, the Easter Vigil in the presence of the Risen Lord and in the splendour of the grace of baptism in his name, which has made us sons and daughters of God, his palpitating Body among men. □

THE DISASTERS OF DOUBTERS

by Anastasia Dias

Thomas was sceptical. He never trusted anyone. But, most of all, he didn't trust himself. He questioned each and every thing, a childhood trait that had fervently carried with him into adulthood. Each time he tried to believe something or someone, he couldn't. Therefore, he couldn't trust the people around him, which included his own family and friends.

He had twelve friends; they were all pretty close to each other. Yet, he didn't trust any of them, except for Him, the leader. He trusted Him. How come? He just did. And, didn't know why.

He had about him a quality that made you feel that you could trust Him. You could tell him everything and anything, he would listen to you. He wouldn't judge you; He would advise you. The

traits one looks for in a good friend and leader, He possessed them all.

He was also extremely popular. People crowded around Him. They brought the sick, blind, deaf and maimed to Him. And, He healed them all. But his popularity was not just because of what *He did*, but because of who *He was*. He was so gentle, kind and compassionate. He spoke wise things, even though, he sometimes spoke in riddles. And, it was difficult for Thomas to understand what He was trying to say.

Like the time, when they planned on going to Bethany on the news that His friend Lazarus had died. Jesus should not have gone. The others had warned Him. If He hadn't, maybe He would still be alive, Thomas thought to himself on the day Jesus died. But, Jesus insisted on going. He said His



friend Lazarus was asleep and he was going to wake him up (He spoke of death figuratively).

Thomas didn't understand what Jesus was trying to say, so he told the others, 'Let us also go with Him and die with Him.' He said it unknowingly. Little did Thomas know; what he said would come true within a few days.

When Jesus told his followers that He was going away to prepare a heavenly home for them, and that they would join Him there soon, Thomas had another doubt in mind and asked Jesus, "Lord, we do not know where you are going, then how can we know the way?"

After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples in that secret room. We all know the story and we know that Thomas wasn't there.

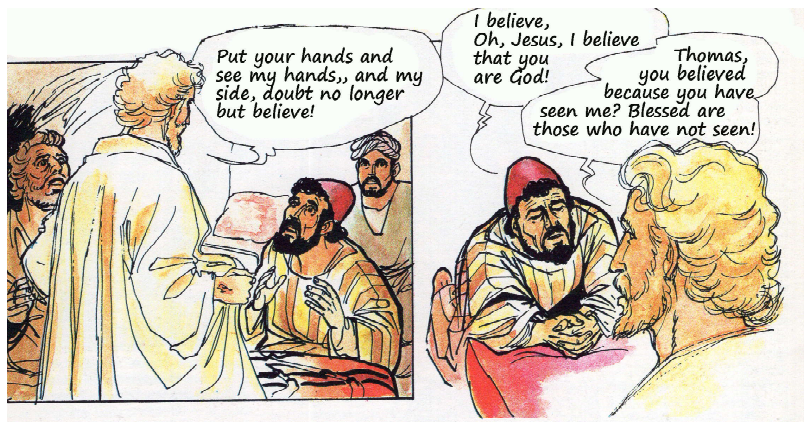
What the other disciples saw and heard when the Risen Lord appeared to them that day, was a new mission and purpose in life. They found joy in their mission. Whereas Thomas spent an entire week in disbelief, wrestling with his doubts. Instead, if he'd just put aside his doubts and believed that Jesus had risen and appeared to the

rest, his mission would have begun too. But, he continued to doubt until Jesus appeared to him a week later. And, he only believed when he saw Jesus.

You see, it was only when Thomas got rid of his scepticism that he could preach the Good News to a foreign land. It was only when Thomas started believing, that he realized his true potential and mission. For that he had to declutter his mind of things he'd held onto since childhood.

That is how you and I spend our entire lives wrestling with our doubts, fears and belief-systems. We struggle with the things we have been forced to believe about ourselves since our childhood or the way our minds are conditioned.

The next time, a trivial question or a doubt pops up into your mind, pause. Think. Is this question worth spending a few seconds of my life? If it is, go ahead and find an answer or a solution to it. If it is not (which happens most often), breathe in and let go. Then, embark on finding your true purpose and fulfilling your mission for this lifetime. □



DON BOSCO IN THE LAND OF WHITE NIGHTS

Meeting the Salesians working in Siberia

Fr. Jozef Toth experienced at first hand the drama of Slovakia, his homeland, in the grip of religious persecution during the communist regime. He trained and studied in the "underground church."

He met his Salesian confreres in secret and not even his closest relatives knew that he was about to become a priest. In 1988 he was ordained a priest. A year later came the "velvet revolution" and with it the era of the Soviet regime came to an end.

"Why did I decide to leave for the missions? During my studies I would meet secretly with about fifteen boys in our apartment or in nearby towns and we would show them missionary films. I was very impressed by the figure of the missionaries, how they were willing to give even their own lives for the faith. The second impulse came from Fr. Ján Sutka, a Slovakian missionary in Ecuador. He spoke about the missions in a concrete and real way, but with great passion. I was impressed and touched.

In 1991, together with Fr Daniel Pravda we went to Russia. Everywhere we were received with kindness and they were well disposed towards our presence. And so, after about a year of preparation, I began the mission in Aldan, Siberia. My first wish had been to go as a missionary to tropical countries, but I ended up in Siberia, in the Sacha Republic."

A little flock

When asked what his work consists of, he replies, "The work of the Salesians in the city of Aldan is a bit different from that of missionaries in Africa or Latin America. Here there are only very small communities of believers, a maximum of 16 people. When I arrived here, there were 6 believers at Sunday Mass. Therefore, pastoral work, that is, baptisms, confirmations, marriages, confessions and other sacraments does not happen in huge congregations. Rather, it is about proclaiming the faith, praying more,



so that people will accept the Good News. In the places where we work, there is a strong migration of young people over 18 years old. They go to study at universities in the big cities. The distances are very large, even 1200 km, and young people do not come back. That is why they lose contact with us. We Salesians want to renew these contacts so we send letters and magazines to encourage them.

Volunteers help us a lot in our work. They work with children in the oratory, with young people in the youth centre, during the summer in the school camps as animators. Without their help there would be many things we could not do."

Ecumenism is at an early stage

What are the people like in Siberia and how do they live? "In the territory of Jakutsk live various ethnic groups. The most numerous are Jakuti and Russians, among the oldest are Eveni, Jugaghiri and Cukèi. As people they are enthusiastic, rich in ideals, friendly, hospitable, joyful and willing to lend a hand. However, they must be encouraged in a sense of fidelity, purpose and stability to the family. They live day to day, they are not capable of making longterm plans, they lack perseverance. We try to help and accompany them in this area.

Ecumenism between Catholics and Orthodox is in its early stages. With the local people we have very good friendly relations. Asians are quite reserved. It takes time and good relations to open up and talk about their problems and experiences.

Winter in Jakuzia is long: it lasts



One of the beautiful churches in Jakutsk. The majority of the population belongs to the Russian Orthodox Church. Catholics are a small minority.

from 6 to 8 months. The temperature sometimes reaches as low as 60 degrees below zero. Since we don't use gas, but wood, a brother has to get up around 3 or 4 in the morning to light the fire. Because of the cold, no fruit is grown here. It is imported from the Caucasus republics and China, but it costs a lot. People buy them only for family celebrations and at New Year or Easter.

Grateful for the faith

Jozef Tóth says of his plans and desires: "Since August of 2011, I left the community of Aldan and moved to the community of Jakutsk. My greatest desire is that younger confreres come to strengthen our presence and pastoral work also in the neighbouring villages. Young people are more dynamic and technically more prepared.

People are grateful for our presence. They say that without us things would be different. That they couldn't live as happily spiritually, their lives would be devoid of meaning, purpose and enthusiasm. Even though ours is only a small group, pastoral work with them is not superfluous and this conviction fills my life. □

Witnesses in & for Our Times



ST. MICHAEL DE SANCTIS (April 10)

DIVINE FASCINATION

Sanctity is a journey and a difficult one too. It takes considerable willpower to be a saint. The Devil in all his wiliness is always at work offering sin as an easy solution to every desire. Scripture says of him, "the Devil is like a roaring lion looking for someone to eat" (1 Pet 5:8). The very next verse offers a counter action: "Resist him, steadfast in your faith" (v. 9).

Every one of us is called to be holy and to live a saintly life: "Be holy for I the Lord am holy" (Lev 20:26). Some of us realize this very early in life like Michael de Sanctis and a number of other young saints like Dominic Savio, Maria Goretti and Teresa of Child Jesus; others realize this later on in life like St. Augustine, and sadly, some never realize it. They spend their whole life thinking that they are the center of the universe or are merely existing for no rhyme or reason.

Michael de Sanctis was born on September 29 1591 in Vich, in the Catalonian region of Spain. He was baptised as Michael Argermir. At the tender age of six, he



expressed his desire to become a priest, and not just an ordinary priest but a monk! Most parents might have been taken aback or might pass it off as childish fantasy but not so Michael's parents. His mother took him at his word. She would often narrate to him instances from the life of the poor mendicant from Assisi, St. Francis whose popularity had

made him something of a cult figure.

Michael listened earnestly to his mother's stories and would make every effort to practice the virtues that Francis stood for and lived by. Such was his zeal that he literally espoused the spirit of Francis much to the surprise of his parents. They had to prevent him from carrying out penances he had given himself and encourage him to enjoy his childhood rather than spend it in mortification. The external actions might have been severely curtailed but Michael kept the internal flame burning bright. He had developed a strong taste for prayer and had set his sights on holiness.

MONASTIC EXPERIENCE

Michael faced a major setback very young in life. Both his parents passed away. Left to fend for himself, Michael sought an apprenticeship with a merchant. In the midst of his duties he would make time for prayer. Besides being actively involved in the ways of making money, he did not neglect his spiritual life and used his free time to foster spiritual growth.

At the age of 12, he went to Madrid intending to join the Trinitarian Order. He entered the novitiate and spent the next three years preparing to become a member. He took his vows at the monastery of St. Lambert at Zaragoza in 1607. Sometime later, he came across a Discalced Trinitarian (a reformed offshoot of the Trinitarian Order) and was drawn to their austere lifestyle.

He made up his mind to join them and sought the permission of his superior. He was granted the permission after much discussion and discernment and went on to get ordained in that Order.

Michael was recognized as a holy man by his fellows. His life of piety and austerity won him not just the admiration of all but also led him to hold positions of authority within the Order. He was known for his special devotion to the Holy Eucharist. He would love to spend hours adoring the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. His companions noted that he often experienced ecstasy while before the Blessed Sacrament. There were occasions when he would fall into ecstasy during the Consecration of the host at the Holy Eucharist.

VENERATION

Many miracles were reported both during and after the lifetime of Michael. Frances Sanz was diagnosed with cancer of the mouth. For 11 days, she prayed through the intercession of Michael. On the 12th day, she went to the doctor only to be told that the cancerous tumour on her lip and tongue were no more. There was absolutely no trace that there ever was a tumour in her mouth! This was one of the miracles that led to the canonization of Michael by Pope Pius IX in 1862. He was declared as patron of cancer patients.

Due to the example of his life Michael came to be known as Michael de Sanctis or Michael of

the Saints. Such was his holiness that people saw him as a saint among saints.

Michael shows us that a life of holiness is possible. We need not become nuns or priests, or even practice extreme penance. What is absolutely necessary is a desire to live a godly life. The way to do that is outlined in the scriptures. Therefore, reading the scriptures becomes important. We will understand what is expected of us when we spend time deciphering God's voice in the scriptures. The same God who invites us to be holy like Himself offers us ways and means of becoming holy. The Bible is full of excellent advice on how to live a life of love and fulfilment.

St. Michael de Sanctis is often pictured kneeling in ecstatic prayer before a Blessed Sacrament. Spending time before the Blessed Sacrament might seem like a simple practice but the benefits are immense. We will not realize how much good can come from merely sitting before the Lord in adoration and prayer until we do it ourselves and taste the goodness of the Lord (Ps 34:8). Many saints have spoken about the immense spiritual and physical benefits that come from spending time with the Lord. These days there are adoration chapels in most of our Churches. It would greatly benefit us if we could make some time to pray before the Blessed Sacrament. Perhaps we could spend time before we go to work or maybe it might be better to relax and pray to the Lord after our day's work. There is no one-size-fits-all strategy. We need to find what

suits us best. The important thing is to make time for it.

I love the hymn which goes

The saviour is waiting to enter your heart.

Why won't you let him come in? There's nothing in this world to keep you apart.

Oh, how he wants to come in.

Time after time he has waited before.

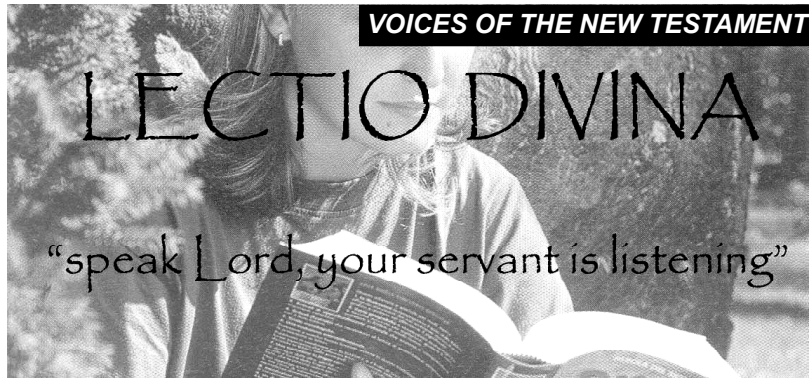
And now he's waiting again.

To see if you're willing to open the door.

Oh, how he longs to come in.

This hymn stresses the point that the Lord desires our presence. God is a god of love. He loves and expects love in return. Many of us think that we can please God by making donations, offering masses, reciting prayers or fulfilling our Christian obligations. But that is simply not true. All those things are important but they are only useful if they are done in love. Otherwise they remain mere activities. The best way to please God is to love Him back.

Loving someone requires that you spend time with them and get to know them. Making time to sit before the Blessed Sacrament and reading the scriptures are ways we can grow in love with God. This will not only help us realize our vocation to be holy but will also make us powerful instruments through whom God will be able to bring about positive changes in the lives of others and in the world as a whole. □



THE PEACE OF PARDON AND RECONCILIATION

by Mattia Principe

"Peace be with you!" is the greeting of the risen Jesus Christ to the Apostles closed in the cenacle, still closed in on them-selves, incapable of looking beyond, incapable of truly believing in new heavens and new lands. "Peace be with you!" is still today the Lord's blessing on a humanity that is incapable of opening the doors of its heart to optimism, joy and hope and cannot find answers to its history, that of the individual and that of the world, inevitably marked by victories and defeats, drastically closed within the limits of space and time.

Still divided as they were at Babel, bewildered by a thousand words, empty and lying, humanity has not yet found that inner peace that generates peace in families, between cultures and different countries, that peace that allows you to speak the same language, while speaking different languages, as by a miracle happened to the Apostles on the day of Pentecost.

And yet, on the evening of that day, the first after the Sabbath, the Risen Lord returned to earth to give us peace, a peace that is different from that negotiated by men as a social pact, a peace that surpasses all human logic, the peace that is born of Christian hope, of the certainty that with death life is not taken away but is transformed.

It is not by chance that the Master wanted to link this proclamation of peace to two significant gestures: he showed the apostles his hands and his side, as if to say: "Look, it is I, the crucified, dead and risen..."

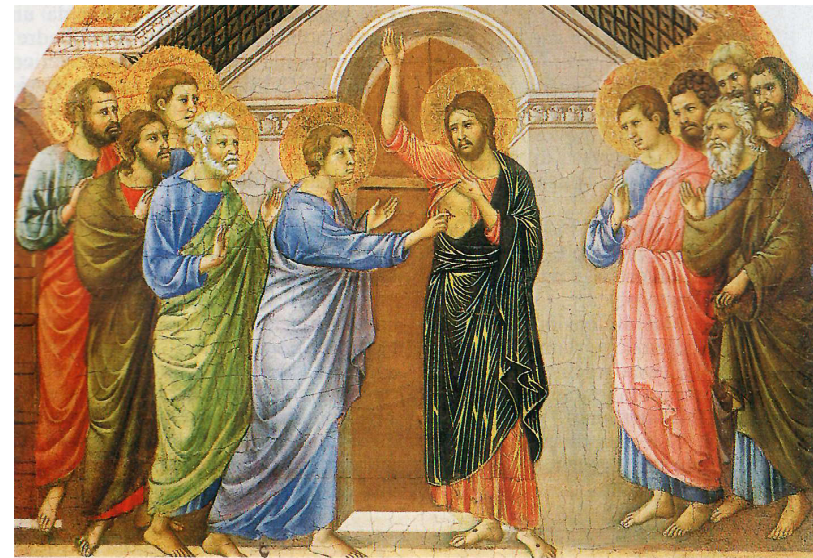
This image would be enough to erase every shadow of sadness from our faces, to free our hearts from every useless burden, but the Lord, who knows our frailty and our fears, wanted to do even more: he breathed on the disciples and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit." And in that breath, as the Father had given life to a fistful of mud, the Risen One gave life to the new man, reborn from above. On that night, as always in the night of

humanity, the Spirit came to renew the face of the earth. That same Spirit who in the beginning hovered over the waters, that Spirit who, generating life in the womb of Mary, began the history of salvation, can also come to us, in the dark days of our existence, like a sudden roar from heaven, with the force of an impetuous wind, like tongues of fire to bring peace, the peace of forgiveness and reconciliation.

In giving us the Spirit, the promised Comforter, the Lord as always true to his words: "Do not be afraid..., I will not leave you orphans." If we had faith as much as a mustard seed, if we could feel that the Lord is with us every day until the end of the world, then indeed pain would change into joy, pessimism into optimism, because if God is with us, no one can be against us. Pentecost opens to all the way of peace, because "no one can say 'He is Lord' except through the power of the Holy Spirit", but

no one can live Pentecost, the peace of heart, if he does not become a builder of peace, if he does not learn to welcome the other, in his uniqueness, in his difference of character, race, religion, as members of a single body, united in Christ and vivified by the Spirit. The Master knew that only the Spirit, whose fruit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, meekness and self-control, would give his disciples the strength to proclaim salvation and us all the courage to give reason for the hope that is in us.

"To each one," Paul teaches "is given a particular manifestation of the Spirit for the common good," and each one, according to his charisma, can accomplish the miracle of tongues. We all know that there is only one language understood throughout the world: that of witness. Those who are truly reborn of the Spirit know how to be optimistic, how to be witnesses of peace, love and joy. □



THE TANGIBILITY AND SIMPLICITY OF THE SMALL

Pope Francis' homily (edited) at Domus Sanctae Marthae on Wednesday, April 29, 2020

In the First Letter of Saint John the Apostle there are many contrasts: between light and dark, lies and truth, sin and innocence (see 1 Jn 1:5-7). But the Apostle always calls to concreteness, to truth, and he says that we cannot be in union with God while living in the darkness because He is light. It is either one thing or the other: a grey area is even worse, because the grey area makes you think you are walking in the light, because you are not in the dark, and this soothes you. The grey area is treacherous. Either one thing or another.

The Apostle continues: "If we say we have no sin in us; we are deceiving ourselves and refusing to admit the truth" (1 Jn 1:8). Because we have all sinned. We are all sinners. And here is something that might deceive us: saying that we are all sinners, as in the same way we say "Hello", or "Good morning", something habitual, even something social, so that we do not have a true awareness of sin. No: I am a sinner because of this, this and this. Concreteness: the concreteness of truth: the truth is always tangible; lies are ethereal, they are like the air, you cannot take hold of them. The truth is concrete. And you cannot go to confess your sins in an abstract way: "Yes, I... yes, once I lost my patience, another time...", in an abstract way. "I am a sinner". Concreteness: "I have done this. I thought that. I said this". Concreteness is what makes me feel I am a sinner in a specific and serious way, instead of keeping it up in the air.

Jesus says in the Gospel, "I bless you Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children" (Mt 11:25). The concreteness of the little ones. It is good to listen to children when they come to confess: they do not say strange things, "up in the air"; they say concrete things, at times even too specific, as they have that simplicity that God gives to the little ones. I always remember a child who once came to tell me that he was sad because he had argued with his aunt. But then he continued. And I said, "But what did you do?" - "I was at home, I wanted to go out and play football" - he was a child - but the aunt (the mother wasn't there) said, "No, you can't go out, you must do your homework first". One word followed another, and eventually he told his aunt to go to hell. He was a child with a good geographical knowledge - he even told me the name of that place where he had sent his aunt! Children are like this: simple, concrete.

We too need to be simple, concrete. Concreteness leads you to humility, because humility is concrete. "We are all sinners" is something abstract. No: "I am a sinner because of this, this, and this". And this leads me to the shame of looking at Jesus and saying, "Forgive me".

The true attitude of the sinner. "If we say we have no sin in us; we are deceiving ourselves and refusing to admit the truth" (1 Jn 1:8). This vague abstract attitude is a way of saying we are not sinners. "Yeah, I lost my patience one time", but everything is "up in the air". I am not aware of the reality of my sins. "But you know, we all do these things. I am sorry, I am sorry". No. "It pains me, I won't do it again, I don't want to do it again, I don't want to think it again". It is important that within us we name our sins. Concreteness. Because if we keep them up in the air, we end up in the dark. Let us become like the little ones, who say what they feel, what they think: they still have not learned the art of saying things that are "gift-wrapped" a bit, so that they are understood without saying. This is the art of adults, which very often is not good for us.

Yesterday I received a letter from a boy from Caravaggio, called Andrea. And he told me about himself. Letters from young people and children are beautiful, because they are concrete. And he told me that he had watched the Mass on the television and he had to "rebuke" me for something: I invite people to give a sign of peace and he said I can't say that, because in this time of the pandemic we can't touch each other. He does not see that you [here in the church] bow your heads without touching each other. But he has the freedom to say things as they are.

And we too, with the Lord, should have the freedom to say things as they are: "Lord, I am in sin, help me". Like Peter after the first miraculous catch: "Leave me, Lord, for I am a sinful man" (Lk 5:8). To have this wisdom of the concrete. Because the devil wants us to live in a tepid way, in the grey area, neither good nor bad, neither white nor black, but grey, a life that is not pleasing to the Lord. The Lord does not like those who are tepid, mediocre. Concreteness. So as not to be liars. "If we acknowledge our sins, then God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins" (1 Jn 1:9). He will forgive us when we are concrete. The spiritual life is so simple, so simple; but we make it complicated with these shades of grey, and in the end we never get there...

Let us ask the Lord for the grace of simplicity. May He give us this grace that He gives to the simple, to children, who say what they feel. They do not hide what they feel. Even if it is wrong, they say it. And with Him too, saying things: transparency. And not living a life that is neither one thing nor the other. The grace of the freedom to say these things; and also the grace of knowing well who we are before God. □

BEAUTIFUL, HOPEFUL SISTERS

By Pierluigi Menato, Tr. Ian Doulton, sdb

"I suggest," Tony Nardi of Nardi Farms, getting into the car. "Prepare a nice lunch. This time we're hosting the young assistant, Dr Fabio to go over the bi-annual accounts. And we must put on a good show."

He nodded to his two daughters, who had been standing on the doorstep, and, from the lowered window of the car, again he admonished them: "Mind you, you must be ready no later than 1:00 p.m.! There's something that's going to be done..."

Liza and Martha looked at each other, smiling:

"That's good," said the elder. "We won't have the usual accountant Carli, the old fart with teeth and who eats only mashed potatoes with soft vegetables. At least we'll see a young face..."

"Oh, yeah, thank goodness," Martha agreed as she turned to go into the house. "Dad only invites impossible people, never a nice young man..."

"If it weren't so," sighed her sister, following her inside, "we would both be married by now. "But our father is selfish; he wants us all to himself.... We are too agreeable for him, you understand!"

Her voice was as sour as a lemon, and the colour of the lemon matched the colour of her face, that of a faded girl. Her forced loneliness irritated her deeply, because in her time, let's face it, she had been beautiful and she also saw the love-light blossom in her breast, it was a love she could not forget.

Now Liza had given up all illusions, resigned to being the madam since her mother died, a dynamic woman who thought of everything, provided for everything, repaired everything. Her only hopes were pinned on her sister: at least she would marry her, eight years younger, if only for the honour of the family. They had money, they were not really so ugly as to be discarded, and in the neighbourhood some poor girls were put in their place, not worth a penny. But today, finally, Tony Nardi had announced the visit of a young man who had to be well treated... He would at least set his eyes on Martha!

With those thoughts swirling around her head, Liza said to her sister, "You need to wring the necks of a couple of chickens right away.... Young men always have an appetite.... And then, what are you cooking?"

The other thought a little, seriously, as if trying to find the solution to the squaring of the circle, then rubbing her chin with her hand she announced importantly: "Here you go: egg noodles, a bunch of artichokes, roast chicken with fresh salad and a Portuguese cream.... Is that okay?"

Elisabeth approved: yes, it was going to be great; there was no lack of chickens on the farm, no lack of eggs, no lack of milk, and the garden had all the vegetable and every good thing needed.

"We'll have Nunzia make the noodles," she said. "No, we can't waste time because we have to

lay the table well and we too have to spruce ourselves up a bit..." she added with simulated indifference. "You could wear the dress you bought last month. It really suits you..."

Martha understood but pretended: "I'll call Nunzia for the chickens. I'll make the cream, I'm good at it." "In the meantime, I'm going to get the tablecloth with the flowers; don't think that because we live in the country, we don't have beautiful things! That's it: with the flowered tablecloth, the gold-rimmed plates... leave it to me."

Liza darted away, busy, and her sister, after a moment of hesitation, went in search of Nunzia. She found her picking the salad and ordered her to wring the necks of the two fat chickens from the hen house. "We have a special guest for lunch today," she said loudly. "For the first course we are making egg noodles. Pull them fine, mind you!"

Outside, you could hear the squawking of the two poor condemned chickens, immediately reduced to silence by the strong hands of Nunzia. Liza thought for a moment, then said to her sister: "Do you think that will be enough? I don't want to make a bad impression. You know, the young men who live in the city are used to it, they're spoiled....



They always need something...".

Martha wisely replied: "But we're going through a recession, dear you; and in the city they live worse than we do...".

Her sister had a witty smile: "Bravo! That's exactly why, when they come to the country where, at least, there is a lot of more, you have to make them feel good.... Besides, for one who lives in a lawyer's office.... Do you understand? ... You never know."

An hour and a half of meticulous grooming before the mirror; preening themselves for effects in the hairstyle, in neck-

laces to match Martha's powder-coloured dress, and on Liza's mauve one; short questions and answers, followed by long meditations and frequent sighs.

To the two girls they never seemed beautiful enough in what they possessed and in this regard they often and willingly tormented poor Tony, their father, who invariably replied with much philosophy: "Who do you think you are? Daughters of a Baron?... After all, we are also peasants, a bit more civilized than the others of course, but, still peasants... And just to stay in the



country among the sheep and the fields, you think you should dress up like city girls? But do me a favour! Be content with what you have and don't bother me with so many stories. I really don't have any money to throw away... as for the rest, if you want to be thrifty, you can learn to make do."

In fact, Liza and Martha, with Nunzia's help, who brought a couple of chickens and a few dozen fresh eggs to the market on Tuesdays and Fridays, got by fairly comfortably. Because of this they owned designer clothes, fashionable shoes, and an assortment of colourful necklaces, of which they were crazy. Their father noticed, but pretended not to.

So that day, after having set the table with great care, showing off the flatware with gold rims and shiny crystal glassware, after having prepared the cream cake, cleaned up the tender artichokes picked from the garden, supervised the roast and arranged on the trolley, a row of dusty bottles: Aleatico, Vin Santo and an old Barolo, everything, in a word, of the best that was stored in the cellar, they took pride in taking the greatest care of their guests.

Off and on, in the course of the morning Martha would question her sister, "I wonder what this young man from the office will be like!"

And her sister, feigning comfort: "He'll be a fine young man, you'll see... to be in the office of a lawyer like Ambrosi.... It's a good thing he didn't send us that dim-witted Carli for the mid-term accounts. At least at the table we won't always be talking about rheumatism, bronchitis and other illnesses! Then she

interrupted to admonish her sister: "Put some more powder on your face.... You're too red today and it clashes with the colour of your dress...":

Then Martha turned, smiling, "What do you say?" she asked almost anxiously. "Will it clash?"

"Clash, clash!" replied the other convinced. "You are really beautiful... I would like to see...".

In their usual jargon, they understood each other perfectly... They both smiled, throbbing with hope.

Finally, in the patio, the engine of the car was heard returning from the city carrying Tony Nardi and the young man, a graduate in Economics and Commerce, from the chartered accountant's offices sent to do the accounts of the farm instead of the usual old accountant. At that noise, the two sisters looked at each other for a moment, palpitating, inflamed with the brightest of hopes... "Who knows!" Life has many equations. And they decide an entire existence...

After a quick last glance at the mirror, Martha, very pleased with herself, was the first to rush down the stairs and into the hallway where she heard her father and the young man in the study, talking...

But as soon as she set foot there, she seemed to freeze. Tony Nardi was talking with a little man, so tall, a bit bald and with formidable lenses, and a pointed beard, wrapped in a chestnut-coloured jacket... He was Dr. Fabio, thirty-six years old, the "young man of the firm" of the lawyer Ambrosi, sent in place of the accountant Carli. □

FIORETTI OF DON BOSCO - 27

by Michele Molineris

146. Payment in Cash (1865)

On December 11, 1865 Don Bosco left Turin for Florence. It would be the first time he was going there. Just as hunger pushes the wolf to the floor, Don Bosco was forced to make that journey in order to meet the increasingly serious and urgent needs of the congregation he was setting up for the poorest and most abandoned youth.

However, he did not venture out. Several people invited him and were willing to welcome him, not excluding the archbishop who declared himself honoured to be able to host him in the Episcopal Palace. In fact, he stayed with him. In fact, the bishop showed him every respect, not only for himself, but also on behalf of his own chapter, which had reserved for him the usual welcome to be given only to the princes of the Church.

To come close to, if not quite reach, the sum he needed to get his creditors off his back, Don Bosco did not hesitate to beg, knocking on the "golden doors" of the rich and dispensing advice and favours in Our Lady's name. In her name, in fact, he was building a shrine in Turin that would extend her devotion to every corner of the earth. But he was so discreet and had such credentials in his suitcase that all doors opened to him and all purses did not hesitate to take up the challenge of his poverty.

"Even in Florence, at the house of Countess Boutourlin, Don Bosco raised up a lady who had been in bed with spinal ailment for about twenty-five years, and had a shrivelled leg. He ordered her to go around the house, to eat, etc., and she did everything he commanded without any effort. Afterwards, Don Bosco asked her if she wanted to get well (promising her a cure), or if she preferred to get sick again. She thought about it for a moment and then answered that she believed it was God's will that she should continue to suffer; and immediately she was forced to return to her bed, from which she never got up again and died after thirty-two years in bed, suffering the most atrocious pains because of a cavity in her bones. This holy woman was Mrs. Carolina Sorelli."

So it happened that when he had to come back, more than once, in spite of everything, they rebelled against his decision and demanded in the name of Florentine charity to prolong his stay. One of these was the Marquise Gerini, who met him at the exit of the cathedral and dared, as her confidence allowed her, to ask him why he had returned to Turin so quickly.

"Why are you returning so soon? Will the world collapse if you stay a couple more days with us?"

"The world won't collapse, dear Marchioness, but the young people are waiting for me."

"Let them wait, by golly! They've not been left alone..."

"But who will feed them? If you consent to support them, I'm willing to compromise..."

"Granted. And what are the conditions?" "I would stay the whole week, if at the end I would be able to collect the money needed to support them during my absence."

"The figure?"

"Ten thousand liras."

"Well, I'll give you the ten thousand liras."

"And I will stay until the end of the week." In a flash, the news went around the city and the siege around Don Bosco began all over again, thanks to the newspapers that had taken possession of it. For those who want to know more, go to Rome and look for the Gerini Institute. You will then know that this was no straw fire, if his descendants managed to set up the most modern professional institute in one of the capital's neediest suburbs, entrusting it to the care of the Salesians. And I have not said everything!" (cf. EBM., VIII, 135ff).

147. The vendetta of the saints (1865)

Don Bosco, on his return from Florence, happened to be in a compartment where opinions did not agree and the spirits were determined to support their own with the presumptuous obstinacy of the prejudiced and the loquacity of the race. When Don Bosco entered, the discourse was uninspiring and at best it was at the expense of the government, which had been in place for about a year, waiting for the final leap

that would take it to the banks of the Tiber.

The sight of the priest, a good-natured priest who stood between the country parish priest and the thug, with the gait and appearance of the "*villan che s'inurba*", fatally removed the chatter from the anonymity to which it was condemned for lack of specific suggestions and set it firmly on the field of religion.

The chorus master was a man of distinguished appearance and loose tongue, who having succeeded in carrying the discourse over the education of youth, had now thrown himself with spear in hand against clerical interference in the training of youth, claiming from the state every right and power in the matter.

"It's time to put an end to black robes and crooked necks. We are no longer in the Middle Ages, where everything tasted like incense, even the bread we ate. Above all, the government should get its hands on that brood of little Jesuits that is the Oratory of Don Bosco in Turin, kick him and his kind, allocating the college to the service of a cavalry regiment. Is it not true, Mr. Abbot?"

Don Bosco, who was at that moment taking notes on a notebook, with the air of someone who was absent from the environment and extraneous to the discussions that was taking place there, was happy to be called into question and answered with conviction: "I don't think so. Meanwhile, do you know Don Bosco?"

"A little," so little that he didn't know he was in front of him. "And isn't it true that in these times, certain of his methods are outdated and some of his ideas outdated, to say the least?" "It would seem not to me. I know Don Bosco well and I can assure you that his only aim was to make his youngsters good Christians and honest citizens."

At that moment the train pulled up at a station and Don Bosco's fellow travellers got off. Six or seven months later, bids were solicited in Rome for some important construction work. The gentleman who had spoken with Don Bosco on the train was a civil engineer and contractor and was anxious to win the contract. A good recommendation would help him considerably. On a trip to Turin he met a marquis with whom he was acquainted and asked his aid. "Go to Don Bosco," the latter replied. "Tell him I sent you and I'm sure he'll do you a good turn with Cardinal Antonelli."

A few days later, the contractor followed the marquis' advice and called on Don Bosco for a recommendation.

"Of course," Don Bosco replied. "I'll give it to you right away." And so he did.

Thanking him, the contractor asked whether he could do anything for him in Rome.

"Yes," Don Bosco smilingly replied. "When you see Cardinal Antonelli, don't tell him that Don Bosco and his boys should be kicked out of the Oratory. That

wouldn't be nice."

Recognizing Don Bosco as the priest he had so vilified, the contractor humbly apologized, assuring him that he would never again denigrate him or others. He won the contract and earned a hundred thousand lire profit. Eventually he became a practicing Catholic and was forever very grateful to Don Bosco (EBM., VIII, 137-138).

148. Then that doctor doesn't know anything (1865)

In the school year 1864-65, Latin IV-V had been entrusted to the cleric Francis Cerruti, but the sickly young teacher became so exhausted that Fr Rua, the rector, begged Don Bosco to relieve him of his heavy burden.

"Let him continue to teach!" was Don Bosco's reply. The good cleric obeyed, but toward the end of April he fell seriously ill. Let's hear the rest from him:

"At that time Don Bosco came to Mirabello; he questioned me about the illness that was tormenting me and suggested some pills, which in truth made me very ill. Then, as I was about to leave, he said to me: "It is not yet your time; you still have to work before you can earn your place in heaven." My condition, however, worsened and the doctor gave me up. I remember hearing him say, "There is nothing else medicine can do. He is too far gone. He must have total rest. Only nature can help him now."

Fr Rua, who in his charity lavished the most attentive care on me, made the youngsters pray

morning and evening, as was customary for the seriously ill. Except that the illness didn't show any sign of going away and Fr Rua, having gone to Turin, spoke to Don Bosco about it and when he came back, he told me: "Listen to this. Don Bosco wants you to know that your hour hasn't come yet and that you'd better think about getting well. He also asked me who your doctor was, and when I told him, he replied, "That doctor doesn't know what he is doing."

On the day Don Rua told me Don Bosco's reply, I remember that I was surprised by such an attack of coughing that, unable to stand it any longer, I threw myself on the bed believing that I would expire at any moment. However, the next day I went back to school and by evening I was feeling better. The following day I felt almost completely recovered and I continued teaching until the end of the school year. Trusting Don Bosco's words, every week I went to Turin to attend some lecture at the university, without feeling any ill effects. Indeed, in July of that same year, I was able to prepare myself to take the exam in modern history at the same university, where I was enrolled as a student in the Faculty of Arts.

I also recall that my doctor was mystified by my recovery and that months later, he was still puzzled and could not quite believe it. "Of course," he would remark, "nature has many secrets we are not yet aware of." He could not bring himself to admit more. He was an upright man, u hardly a churchgoer.

I am convinced that, considering my physical exhaustion and my serious and long illness, my recovery was a miracle..." (EBM., VIII, 81).

149. Don Bosco paid back as much as he could (1866)

On April 9, 1891 Fr Michael Rua wrote the following statement in Milan:

"Mrs. Rosa Guenzati told me that in 1866 Don Bosco passed through Milan by rail. Having only a few hours to stop in that city, he did not even leave the station; however, she had written to her husband to go and find him there, as in fact he went there accompanied by her. As they were talking, Don Bosco said to him:

"This year, Mr. Guenzati, stock up on cloth, because you will find a way to sell it again."

After Don Bosco's departure, the couple, mindful of his prediction, began to look for more cloth than in the previous years; and, what he had foretold, came true in such a way that at the end of the year, happy with the blessing they had received from the Lord through Don Bosco, they said:

"If we had had more faith in Don Bosco's words, we would certainly have sold it."

However, grateful to the Lord for the profit they had made, they thanked him by giving some to the poor, as they were used to doing." The suggestion was the beginning of a remarkable fortune (M.B., VIII, 320). □



MARY AND THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH

by Cardinal Anastasio Ballestrero

When the Mother of the Lord presented her Son to the temple to fulfil the law, the prophet announced to Mary what it would mean for her to be the mother of this child who is the Saviour of the world: "A sword will pierce your soul"; thus foreseeing that Mary's motherhood would not only be the ineffable and joyful experience of a Son called Jesus, but also the tremendous and painful experience of a Son who would be the Crucified One.

But even in the face of old Simeon's proclamation she had nothing to say: she said 'yes' on the day of the annunciation and in that "yes" full of faith and obedience there was everything that Mary could say, could want, could do. And she continues silently to believe that the things announced by the Lord would be fulfilled.

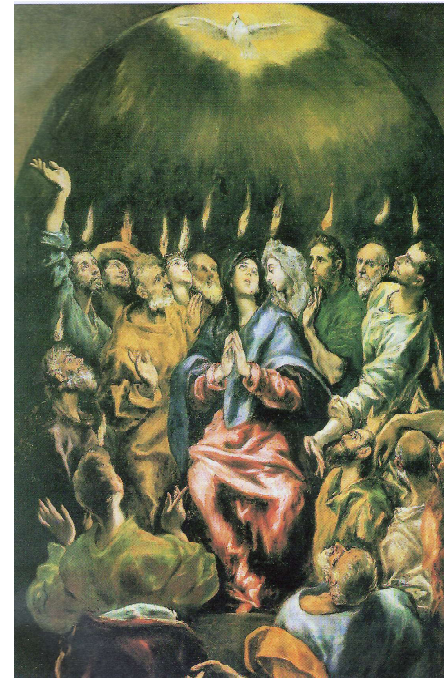
From the day of Jesus' presentation in the temple, how many days would pass before Our Lady would see the fulfillment of the prophecy on Calvary with the immolation of her Son?

How many days would pass? Let's try to count them, they were many indeed.

During this time, Mary believes, adores, is silent and obeys. Is this Mother of the Lord really a creature who precedes the Church of God, so inexhaustible in her belief and in her waiting for the time of God?

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit would descend onto the Upper Room. Mary would also be there and Mary, already filled with the Holy Spirit, what would she do? She would witness that wonderful outpouring, when the Church, all fermented by the Spirit, would set out on the roads of the world; when the commands of the Lord Jesus would be executed and when the apostles would finally understand what the Lord had asked of them and what they should do.

The life of the Church begins and Our Lady is there. What is she doing there? She did not receive the apostolic mandate, the Lord did not say to her: 'Go, preach the gospel to all creatures, baptize in the name of the Father



Mary, present at the beginning of the Church, on the day of Pentecost, will accompany it on its journey down the centuries, along the roads of the world.

and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.' The Lord did not say to her: 'Whose sins you forgive will be forgiven.' No, but she was present. She is the Mother of Jesus and her presence becomes a point of reference, of connection with Christ that the apostles would always find in this silent presence that fills the faith of all, that increases the hope and charity of all. She is the mother of the Church who accompanies her in her first steps while being a missionary in the world.

Thus, the mystery of Mary is fulfilled. God's plan for her is revealed little by little and Our Lady is the most faithful one who

does not delay God's plans, but goes along with them. There is no need for her to comment on or emphasize them, there is only need for her to serve them and nourish them with her motherhood. She does this for the Church, which sets out on its journey, preceded and accompanied by her, and I would even say anticipated by her in her final conclusion, because Mary has already arrived in heaven.

Well, this mother of the Church who, through faith, is continually a mother for grace, for hope, for the charity of the people of God, we want to remember her, we want to honour and glorify her, aware, however, that in doing so we glorify the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and we become a profoundly Christian community, we become Church.

Let us remember, what we are doing is not only a gesture of popular devotion, but a gesture of substantial coherence for our identity as Christians, as a Christian community, for our identity as children of Mary in Christ the Lord.

We want to do this, and in doing so, it seems to us that the serenity of Mary's presence fills our hearts, soothes them, enlightens them, and gives them a new freedom. And the joy of the Spirit fills our hearts to bless, to praise, to give thanks and to never allow our human miseries to obscure the splendour of God's works that are also accomplished in our midst. Because our days too are the days of grace, of the outpouring of the Spirit, of the triumph of His love and of His kingdom. □



MY VOCATION STORY

ME AND MY FATHER'S PRAYERS

Fr. Shaun D'Lima, sdb

I have been with Don Bosco from the age of three and that is one of the reasons I chose to be a Salesian Priest. As I reflect on my life, I realize the real reason for me to become a Salesian priest was my childhood. The time that I spent with my parents taught me to be the person I am. I was taught prayers by my father who took me to the school on a bicycle. His life and teaching made me pray and discover the call that I had within.

My mother sacrificed her job so that I could have a good formation at home. My brother was my best friend and supported me in all my difficulties.

I still remember the day I let my family know about my decision, to go to Lonavla (aspirantate) to begin my priestly journey. Everyone at home supported and encouraged me. My brother who always had a special love for me keeps on reminding me of his support and prayers.

The journey of my formative years was good, encouraging, and at the same time tough indeed. The pain and the suffering of the corrections that I received to improve myself taught me to be a simple and humble priest. This journey of my growth was worth remembering, worth going through, worth talking about, and worth everything. To this day I



catch myself talking and reminding myself about everything that happened in my life. It makes me exclaim: "Those were the days. I did experience Jesus all through those days. This foundation made me dwell in and cherish God's presence in my life.

Today as a Salesian priest, I keep on reflecting on all that I have gone through, as this is what gives me the strength to carry on. When I go home for holidays and see my Dada on his cycle mumbling, it reminds me that he is praying, it reminds me reminds me that he is praying for me. I still remember the prayer he taught me to say each time I ended with any formal prayer. The prayer

was Dear Lord Jesus "Make me a strong, kind, gentle, handsome, grateful, prayerful, and loving boy. Thank you, Jesus. Love Shaun. Today as I pray that

prayer, instead of saying a loving boy, I say a loving priest.

May God help me live my life in fidelity and perseverance all my life the Salesian way. □

TO BE FORGIVEN

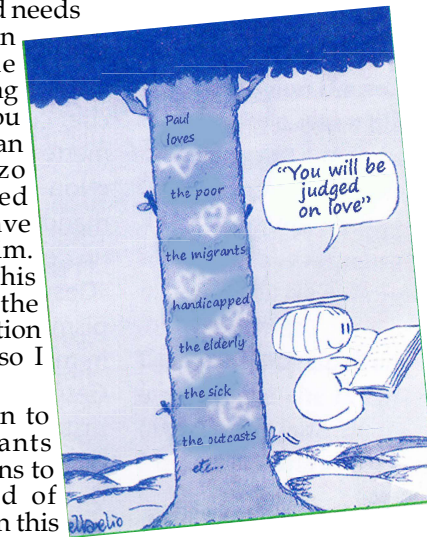
Why should I go to confession?
(Paul, a university student at Tor Vergata)

Dear Paul,

I know very well what is behind your question: something between the conviction that certain practices are outdated and the effort involved in having to disclose "my things" to someone else who might be even worse than me. You are in very good company: I think there are very few confessions in which one does not declare the struggle of facing one's sins. Besides, why should it be enjoyable? Is there really anyone who does not feel annoyed at the awareness of their own limitations?

But we cannot forgive ourselves: we would immediately feel that it does not 'work.' A word needs to reach me to tell me that I can start again, that someone important to me is even willing to forget it all. I will leave you with words more beautiful than mine: they are Fr Lorenzo Milani's, when he was asked why he was not willing to leave a Church that mistreated him. "For me, who accepted it, this Church is the one that has the sacraments. I don't get absolution for my sins from the Espresso I drink.

Absolution for sins is given to me by a priest. If one wants forgiveness from sins one turns to the most stupid, backward of priests in order to get it. (...). In this religion there is, among other things, a very important, fundamental sacrament, the sacrament of the confession of sins. Because of which, almost for that alone, I am a Catholic. To continually have my sins forgiven. To have it and to give it. □



+91-8482951815
vocations@sdbinb.in
joindonboscomumbai

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Babysitting

With some misgivings, we left a young babysitter in charge of our three energetic youngsters. When we returned a few hours later, she was sitting alone watching TV.

I went to check on the children and found them in our narrow hallway. By bracing their arms and legs against the walls, two of them had climbed up to the ceiling.

"The babysitter taught us how," they said gleefully.

The sitter joined me, her face a deep red. "Since they had me climbing the walls, I figured they might as well be too," she stammered.

We kept the same girl for the next two years.

What's for Dinner

The young couple invited their elderly pastor for Sunday dinner. While they were in the kitchen preparing the meal, the minister asked their son what they were having.

"Goat," the little boy replied. "Goat?" replied the startled man of the cloth, "Are you sure about that?"

"Yep," said the youngster. "I heard Dad say to Mom, 'Today is just as good as any to have the old goat for dinner.'"

Prescription Labels

A pharmacy major was taking a course in Dispensing. One day they were discussing the various labels affixed to prescription containers, such as, "Take with food," and "Take with water."

At the end of class, the professor passed out a few sample labels. Days later he noticed that one

member of the class had stuck one of them onto his chemistry textbook:

"Caution: May cause extreme drowsiness."

Nice Boyfriend

One night a teenage girl brought her new boyfriend home to meet her parents, and they were appalled by his appearance: leather jacket, motorcycle boots, tattoos and pierced nose.

Later, the parents pulled their daughter aside and confessed their concern. "Dear," said the mother diplomatically. "he doesn't seem very nice."

"Oh please, Mom," replied the daughter, "if he wasn't nice, why would he be doing 500 hours of community service?"

Sick Call

Mr. Frobisher constantly called Dr. Wilson at all hours of the day and night and would then keep him on the phone with a litany of imagined ailments.

Finally, the doctor could take it no longer. "Listen Mr. Frobisher, if you wake me up again in the middle of the night with another one of your tales about some made-up ailment, I am going to insist you see another physician. Have I made myself clear?"

A week later, Mr. Frobisher slipped and fell down a flight of stairs, breaking his hip, two ribs, an elbow and suffering a concussion. He was rushed to the hospital and put in intensive care. An hour later, Dr. Wilson walked in, saw his condition, and exclaimed. "I think you're finally getting the hang of it!" □

THE DEVOTION OF THE THREE HAIL MARYS



The devotion of the THREE HAIL MARYS is a very simple yet most efficacious devotion. Everyday, recite Three Hail Marys, adding the invocation: "O Mary, My Mother, keep me from mortal sin." Many people recite the Three Hail Marys as part of their morning and night prayers. To practise this devotion in time of danger, stress, special need or temptation, is a sure means to obtain Our Lady's help.

After our marriage my wife resigned from her job and was a housewife. Due to certain circumstances we again both had to take up jobs. So in total after a gap of 3 years inspired by Covid situation Due to the Devotion of 3 Hail Mary's my Spouse got a good job with a good pay and easy facilities to work with. I wish to thank Lord Jesus and Mother Mary for this Blessing.

Elvis Pink

My mother aged 64 was diagnosed with advanced breast cancer on September 27, 2020. The whole family, my father and myself were shocked since the tumor in her left breast was ulcerated. Being the only son to my parents, I was very shattered at the condition of my beloved mother who had been affected by this terrible disease. From a very early age, she had nurtured in me a tremendous love and trust in Mother Mary. I went to the Shrine of Our Lady of Health and prayed to Mother Mary to intercede for my mother since the doctors were counting her days. At the church I heard a voice that said: "My dear son, I will take care of your mother. Pray and praise the Lord Jesus." After this we had gone to take a PET scan which revealed an inconclusive result. I prayed and cried to Mother Mary to guide me where to take my mother. She showed me a team of young, spiritual doctors in our hometown of Nagercoil. They said they would treat her and with the blessing of God she would be healed. Through a series of serious treatments from Stereotactic Radiation - 3 cycles to the brain, chemotherapy - 8 cycles, a surgery to remove her left breast and 15 cycles of radiation to the breast for a period of nine months. I prayed and offered Rosaries everyday to save my mother from this dreadful disease. I prayed that my mother would withstand the serious procedures. Thanks to Mother Mary, now on a recent examination, it was found that the tumour in the brain had not developed in the past one year and was beginning to shrink. I am grateful through the intercession of Our Blessed Lord and His Most Holy Mother my mother is improving.

E.J.A. Anish

**LOVING CHILDREN TO
THEIR LOVING MOTHER**

Dear Mother Mary, thank you for all the graces and blessings bestowed on our family, especially our grandson getting his "driver's License." Please continue to bless, help and protect us.

Your Grateful Children in Perth

My heartfelt thanks to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and Mary Help of Christians for sending people to help me during the lockdown and for helping me stay alive in a difficult situation. I'm especially grateful for all my needs being taken care of.

M. Dodd, Pune

My grateful thanks to Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Mary, Queen of the Holy Rosary and St. Anthony for having heard my prayers and helped me get translation work (Portuguese into English and vice versa).

Higino Mascarenhas Goa

Thank you Mother Mary for, through your intercession your Son Jesus granted my grandson George Mark a cure from an acute ear infection and for many other favours received.

Mrs. O D'Mello, Mumbai

Post marriage, I did not have any issue conceiving. But after I conceived, my doctors had forced me to abort my child. Being a diabetic, my Hb a/c was 9.6. Under such high and uncontrolled sugar, it was very risky for my child's health as well as going ahead with the pregnancy. But, I never lost hope in my Mother. I constantly prayed and underwent various tests and sonographies to check for the safe health and any anomalies in my child till 6 months of pregnancy. I promised Don Bosco, that most delivery I would bring my child to the church and praise God for all these favours. I had a safe c-section and my child was born normal completely safe without any abnormalities. I will forever be grateful to my Mother for helping a 'mother' in need.

Gyzel Carvalho

It was a month and a half back that I had acute pain in my chest. This left me completely uncomfortable. I was advised to go for an ECG which showed some variance. Post which, I was advised to go for 2D echo and later a stress test, but due to my high BP and high pulse rate I was denied any further tests. Finally, I was advised to go for an angiography. With very high sugar, BP and pulse rate, I was a bit scared. On the OT table, I remembered my mother-in-law telling my children to call on Jesus for help and miracles. Believing in it I too thought of doing the same. All I did was to keep calling Jesus constantly. And trust me, a miracle took place. The cardiologist noted that my heart was clean with no plaque and zero blockages. He himself claimed that it was nothing short of a miracle. I walked out of the OT with a clean heart. I thank almighty God for his mercy and Mamma Mary for being there.

Francis D'Souza, Dahisar

My daughter was is in Qatar, in the ninth month of her pregnancy was found bleeding in her hotel room where she had her husband had gone for an overnight Eid holiday.

When she telephoned us, all she could utter was that her husband was trying to get an ambulance to take her to the hospital. My family and I went into an urgent prayer mode. By the time her husband telephoned us next, she was admitted to the hospital but under strict observation. She spent four days in the hospital with various reports of scans showing negative and positive results. One evening through a normal routine procedure of the hospital she was being discharged. However, in the discharge report there were some abnormalities, one being that there was some fluid accumulated in between the brain and the skull of the infant which was caused they thought by a cyst 3.5 cm long.

With my family I stormed heaven, praying the three Hail Marys (adding a Memorare at the end). The intercession of St Anne and our Blessed Mother never stopped. We decided to take another opinion and visited a private gynaecologist.

A fresh scan was taken after she narrated her history and all the previous reports were examined. Through Our Blessed Lord, the Divine Physician, our Blessed Mother and St Anne's intercession "No Abnormalities" were reported. The doctor repeatedly told her: "I am pointing out to you the place where you said there was fluid. See for yourself. There is no fluid, everything is normal. Sometimes things appear and disappear. At present, everything is normal.

I will continue to place my trust in Mother Mary and through the recitation of the Three Hail Marys I am sure Mother Mary and Saint Anne my daughter will be blessed with a normal delivery.

T. Gonsalves, Mumbai

My heartfelt thanks to Mary Help of Christian, St Dominic Savio and St Anthony for the gift of a normal healthy baby girl to my daughter and a safe delivery.

Mrs Jeanette Doyle

POPE'S WORLDWIDE PRAYER NETWORK

APRIL 2022

For health care workers

We pray for health care workers who serve the sick and the elderly, especially in the poorest countries; may they be adequately supported by governments and local communities.

Regd RNI no. 9360/57;
Postal Regn. MNE/89/2021-23
WPP License no. MR/Tech/WPP-72/NE/2021-23
License to post without prepayment
posted at Mumbai Patrika Channel Sorting Office
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

In April 2019, I conceived after six years of marriage and we were overjoyed. Alas, our happiness didn't last long and in August 2019, I lost my child owing to some complications. I was both heartbroken and frustrated. My faith was totally shaken. My dream was shattered and I gave up all hope of conceiving again. But I conceived again in November the same year. I was put on strict bed rest. Amidst all my doubts and anxieties I turned in prayer to Jesus and his blessed mother Mary Help of Christians to save my baby this time. We were blessed with a lovely baby boy in June 2020. Nathan Antonio was born premature in the seventh month but our Lord and his blessed Mother Mary have watched over him. I urge all who are troubled today to surrender to our merciful Lord and his blessed mother in full faith and prayer. Our Lord and his loving Mother have never abandoned their children. *M. Juliana D'souza, Goa*

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**