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*Rejoice,
 O Virgin Mother,
 for Christ
 has risen
 from the tomb
 alleluia!*

From The Editor's Desk
 THE EASY TARGETS WE ENCOUNTER

In a lovely book called "The Places Between," b Rory Stewart, a tough young Scot, recounts his walk through the mountains of Afghanistan. He spent nights in villages, observing the local men as they interacted. He noted, "The order in which men enter, sit, greet, drink, wash, and eat defines their status, manners, and views of their companions. Status depended on age, ancestry, wealth, profession, whether a man was a guest, and other factors. When senior men from the village entered, we all rose in their honour. However, when the servants brought the food, I was the only one to look up. Servants, like women and children, were socially invisible."

Today, women and children are much more visible; when they enter a space, they often create a lively stir. Still, unspoken rules govern how we listen to people—be they men or women—and determine who gets our attention or can be interrupted. It is disheartening when good people begin to view innocent individuals as easy targets due to unfounded biases. Prejudice involves making judgments without evidence, often based on labels or social stereotypes. This applies even to those we respect.

We have our own ways of showing respect. I once heard a Jesuit rector share how he welcomed Bishop Dominic Tang, who spent over twenty years in a Communist prison in China, seven of which were in solitary confinement. The bishop had an extraordinary story to tell.

When neighbours learned that a bishop was visiting, they came to pay their respects. Some half-expected to kneel and kiss his ring. Yet, as each new visitor arrived, the bishop would jump out of his chair and hurry over to greet them, making them the centre of attention. This simple, self-effacing gesture impressed the onlookers even more than the stories he shared about his imprisonment.

In Afghanistan, hospitality meant providing an evening meal—which might consist of just a piece of bread—and allowing guests to spread their mats and sleep on the floor. For a traveller in the snowy mountains, this hospitality could mean the difference between life and death. It was a sacred and unquestioned duty.

Jesus startled his disciples when he said, "Those who are not against us are with us" (Luke 9:50). It is all too easy to criticize easy targets—those we can slander without a second thought. Anyone can do that. The challenging task, the Christian task, is to seek out what makes us similar to others, to try to understand the world from the perspective of those who are different.

When Abraham Lincoln was criticized for being too courteous to his enemies and reminded that he should destroy them, he replied, "Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?"

Fr. Ian Doulton, sdb

PASSING ON LIFE

by Bishop Gianpaolo Dianin

We express our gratitude to all newlyweds who embrace life and persevere through challenges, including economic hardships.

On February 2nd, Italy celebrates the 47th Day of Life. The Italian bishops have issued a message for this year that aligns with the Jubilee, titled “Transmitting Life, Hope for the World.” It features a subtitle drawn from the Book of Wisdom: “You are forgiving of all things, for they are yours, O Lord, lover of life” (Wis 11:26).

The theme of life challenges everyone, particularly spouses who are, by vocation, called to be bearers of life. They conceive, give birth, and present life to the world as a precious treasure and a living hope for both today and the future.

The bishops remind us that our world appears to have lost hope, as many no longer believe in the value of life. Countless children die in wars, leading to a tragic “massacre of the innocents.” The pain suffered by parents who lose hope in their children is immense, often replaced by feelings of hatred.

Additionally, France has enshrined the “right to abortion” in its Constitution, while those who strive to protect lives are accused of infringing on freedom. This perspective overlooks the fact that support and assistance could save many lives. For instance, the



Centri di Aiuto alla Vita in Italy have helped over 280,000 children be born in their 50 years of activity.

In the Bull of Indiction of the Jubilee, the Pope writes, “Openness to life with responsible motherhood and fatherhood is the project that the Creator has inscribed in the hearts and bodies of men and women—a mission

**EVERY
NEW LIFE
IS
“HOPE MADE
FLESH!”**

that the Lord entrusts to spouses and their love” (SnC 9). The Italian bishops further emphasize that every new life is “hope made flesh” and express their gratitude to all spouses who cherish life and persevere in the face of challenges, including economic difficulties.

In the West, we often talk about a “demographic winter,” which can arise from both objective issues and an individualism that undermines the very essence of life itself. This mindset tends to focus on the present moment and struggles to envision a hopeful future. Moreover, the frenetic pace of life, combined with fears about the future, lack of job security, and inadequate social protections, heavily weighs down on indivi-

duals and diminishes their desire to bring new life into the world, often replacing the wish for children with reliance on temporary substitutes.

The Pope urgently calls for a revival of hope. He notes, “The desire of young people to generate new sons and daughters, as the fruit of their love, brings the future to every society and is a source of hope: it depends on hope and generates hope” (SnC 9).

We cannot overlook the many couples who, despite their desire, are unable to have children. Many people today turn to medically assisted procreation without considering the moral implications, sometimes making unsettling choices, such as those involved in surrogacy. Others choose to offer “surplus love” by taking in children without families or by helping struggling families by providing support within their homes. Blessed are the couples who embrace adoption and foster care.

The Pope calls for “a social alliance for hope, which [...] works for a future marked by the smiles of so many boys and girls who can fill the now too many empty cradles in various parts of the world” (SnC 5).

Our bishops remind us that Scripture presents a God who loves life, desires it, and joyfully spreads it in numerous and unexpected ways throughout the universe He created and sustains. He especially loves human beings, who are called to share in His divine life and possess filial dignity. □

PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN

don Carlo Broccardo

Something important happened that day, on the way down from Jerusalem to Gaza. It was important for the Ethiopian: he finally reached the goal of his spiritual journey; and it was important for Philip: he announced Jesus!

It was the month of March and they were in Jerusalem, when in response to a problem Peter and the community chose persons to accompany the Apostles in their ministry. One of these was called Philip. It then happened that a persecution against the Church broke out in Jerusalem: Stephen was stoned to death and many of the others were forced to flee to safety. One of the most active, in the eighth chapter of the Acts was Philip: we find him first in Samaria, north of Jerusalem: then on the road going to Gaza, to the south-west; later,

at the end of our passage, he will go north again, along the coast, as far as Azotus and Caesarea Maritime,

Philip was a peculiar fellow: or maybe not.... In the sense that from the account in the Acts, we know very little about him. What is clear is that where the Lord sent him, he went. So, while he was in Samaria, where he was preaching and performing healings with great success (to use a wrong word, but one that gives us an understanding of the situation), an angel of the Lord told him to leave everything and go towards



Gaza, in a desert area, by a road on which there was no one. And Philip went there.

The road was not entirely deserted; there was an Ethiopian traveller too. In ancient times, 'Ethiopia' referred to the region south of Egypt (now known as Sudan), about which little was known. Homer, in the *Odyssey*, describes the world's borders as reaching into Ethiopia. Thus, Philip met a man from a great distance, yet he was not entirely foreign to the religion of Israel. The Ethiopian was returning from a trip to Jerusalem and was reading the Holy Scripture. Although he was a pagan, he was deeply fascinated by the Jewish faith and drawn to its spirituality.

The reader perceives him as a very important individual; he manages the economy of the queen of Ethiopia and oversees her kingdom. Nevertheless, he remained humble. He readily admitted he did not understand and was unafraid to ask questions. This openness initiated an inner journey that would ultimately lead him, in just a few verses, to baptism. After this moment, "the Spirit of the Lord took Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more; and, full of joy, he went on his way."

Something significant occurred that day on the way down from Jerusalem to Gaza. That moment was essential for the Ethiopian, as he finally reached the pinnacle of his spiritual journey; it was also important for Philip, who proclaimed Jesus! This story holds significance for us as readers, particularly because it takes place near the end of the Gospel according to Luke.



To recap: Philip and the Ethiopian were traveling on the same road departing from Jerusalem. Philip approached the Ethiopian, and they travelled a stretch of road together during which Philip explained the Scriptures, particularly focusing on Jesus' death and resurrection. This led to a sacramental moment – baptism. Suddenly, Philip disappeared, and the Ethiopian continued on his journey, filled with joy.

Have you noticed? This narrative closely resembles the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, where Jesus converses with two disciples. In this case, it's Philip and the Ethiopian instead.

This isn't the first time such a pattern has emerged. For example, when Peter teaches in the temple courtyards in Jerusalem, the crowd hangs on his every word, while the leaders wish to kill him. Similarly, Stephen, like Jesus, faced death while proclaiming words of forgiveness and entrusting himself to God. These are just two of many examples that illustrate this theme.

The message is clear. Jesus has ascended to heaven. but he is still present among us in the flesh: in the flesh and bones of people who not only talk about him, but also behave like him. □

REASONS TO BELIEVE - 4

by Franco Molinari

A gentleman among rogues

A gentleman can be found even in a synagogue full of rascals. An honest and sensible person must have been that certain Gamaliel, who, despite being from the despised group of Pharisees, dared to defend the early Christian movement. He observed, "If this activity is human, it will fade away; if it is from God, you will not be able to destroy it" (Acts 5:38-39).

There is no escaping the dilemma: either Christianity is from God or it is not. If it is from God, then it is indeed vain and dangerous to persecute it; if it is not from God, it will collapse like a house of cards.

Let us attempt to develop this experimental verification by starting with doctrine.

Many ideologies have sunk in the sea of history in two thousand years. On the other hand, the ethic of brotherly love has withstood the wear and tear of time and has become the benchmark even for non-believers. Benedetto Croce, who did not believe in any religion except freedom, wrote the famous essay *Why We Cannot Call Ourselves Christians*. And an atheist psychoanalyst, speaking

of the Gospel, wrote: 'As I read it, I feel read'. Love, preached in the Sermon on the Mount, is the surest factor in preserving human equilibrium (or re-establishing it). The Gospel offers insights to psychoanalysts and is a factory of saints, a company that has endured for twenty centuries and does not go bankrupt, only occasional lay-offs. There has been no shortage of crises. The society of believers can be compared to an oak tree that is constantly shaken, never bent. Nero had Christians die like flaming torches, lighting his garden. On that hill now stands the Vatican.

The encyclopaedia of atheism guaranteed that within fifty years, the seed of religious superstition would be lost. More than seventy years after the October Revolution, there are more Christians in Russia than in France.

Even the most glaring weaknesses of the popes have not succeeded in undermining the Church. A well-known writer once confided to me that he intended to dedicate a book to the 'popes,' including figures like Alexander VI. I responded by saying that his work would serve as the best defence of Christianity

because it would illustrate that the foundation of Christian strength is Christ, the Son of God, rather than the leadership of the Vatican.

In addition to stability through time, we must also consider continuity across space. Catholicism is a resilient plant that thrives in both polar cold and equatorial heat. However, the true test lies in the twenty centuries of holiness and love that the Church has demonstrated.

The early Christians had a powerful impact, as evidenced by the words of the pagans who observed: "See how they love one another." This simple observation led to countless conversions. This radical love during the Iron Age fostered a truce among warring factions; in the violent Middle Ages, it inspired the establishment of hospitals that cared for the sick and marginalized, where one could find the likeness of Christ; and in modern times, St. Vincent de Paul championed the cause of the imprisoned and the destitute.

Even during the revolutionary fervour of the *sans-culottes*, who destroyed many statues of saints, they paused before the statue of Saint Vincent de Paul, declaring, "This one is not to be touched."

The essence of charity remains unwavering, even in the brutal condi-

tions of wartime. Father Maximilian Kolbe selflessly volunteers in a death bunker to save the life of a Jewish family man. This act serves as a profound test of love, illustrating the core message of the Gospel. It is understandable how even an unbeli-ever like Francis Carnelutti was moved to tears by such a display of compassion.

The Miracle of Poverty

Dante Alighieri, the author of the Divine Comedy and the father of the Italian language, wrote: "If the world were to convert to Christianity without miracles, that would be the greatest miracle of all."

The Gospel is filled with wonders: the blind receiving their sight, the lame walking, the crippled leaping like fawns, water turning into wine, and the dead rising from their graves. However, Jesus does not perform miracles willingly; he does them almost reluctantly. He rebukes the crowd, saying, "You follow me because you have eaten the miraculous bread."



The essence of faith is not rooted in sensationalism but in love, freedom, and humility. Whoever loves respects the freedom of others; discretion is the most significant proof of love. I could compel five billion people to recognize Him with a magic wand, but instead, God remains hidden—so hidden that He allows Himself to be subject to the denials and rejections of atheists.

In the Eucharist, His mystery of love is presented under the appearance of bread and wine. We have the choice to receive Him or not; we can accept His logic of dedication or adopt a logic of power.

In the Gospel, Jesus proclaims, "Blessed are the poor, and woe to the rich." Pope John reminded us at the opening of the Council, "The Church is the Church of all, but above all, it is the Church of the poor."

Jesus, the master of the world, was born as a humble nomad and found refuge in a stable. Although he could have summoned legions of angels to defend him against the occult powers of the Jewish leaders, he chose instead to surrender himself to the authorities of this world. He did not select his first collaborators from among the intellectuals of the time; rather, he reached out to humble fishermen who possessed a hard-headed determination. His friends became the apostles, and their successors, tasked with proclaiming Christ as the Saviour of the world. They rely on God's power in their apostolic mission, which often reveals the strength of the Gospel through the weakness of its

witnesses.

The Second Vatican Council emphasizes that "all those who dedicate themselves to the service of the Word of God must use the means suitable for the Gospel, which differ from those appropriate to the earthly city."

This reflects the joyful meaning of the Beatitudes. The four beatitudes in Luke and the eight in Matthew emphasize the theme of poverty. Jesus blesses and declares as worthy of salvation those who lack human security—those who feel failures and have lost trust in themselves or in humanity.

The bliss of poverty does not imply that those in the Third World, who are starving to death, are happy. Christians must actively combat economic destitution; they must eliminate inequalities and stand against exploitation. Instead, those who truly find blessing are those who acknowledge their nothingness and cling to the only true security, which is God.

God came to earth and chose poverty as the path to success, further confirming that His kingdom is not of this world.

A multinational corporation thrives by relying on substantial capital and the expertise of capable executives. Similarly, the multinational church has remained resilient for two thousand years, even though its foundational principles emphasize financial poverty and the simplicity of childhood as an intellectual ideal.

Yet, there exists an inexhaustible social resource: the capacity to love one's enemy. This is the ultimate advantage. □

FB

TIME FOR THE SPIRIT

EIGHT STEPS TO ATTAIN PEACE OF MIND

We live in the 'realm of noise'. Today, words like concentrate or recollect seem meaningless. How can we achieve true tranquillity of soul that allows us to grow spiritually, without having to flee to a lonely mountain? Here are eight simple steps.

We are constantly bombarded by noise. Outside, we wake up to the sound of the alarm clock, the blender running at breakfast, and the ringing of the phone. In our cars or on public transport, music surrounds us. In the city, we are faced with the noise of revving engines, ambulance sirens, honking horns, and construction work that assaults our ears. Our eyes are overwhelmed with information from shop windows, advertising posters, bright lights, constantly moving objects, displays, and television screens. We are hit with a barrage of details. Inside, we deal with our own struggles: worries, nervousness, anxieties, and various ailments. How can we find peace and tranquillity amid this chaos?



head-on. We should remember the classic prayer: "Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to understand the difference between the two.

1. Eliminate negative thoughts.

Life is filled with suffering, and often this suffering arises from our unmet expectations. There are four 'inevitable' sufferings: being born, aging, falling ill, and dying. These are aspects of life that rarely go as we hope. Life does not come to us as we wish. Even in the Bible, Qohelet states, "Everything is vanity, like chasing the wind. Everything in this life seems futile."

Despite this, many significant and minor events depend on us every day. Let us create a list each day and confront these events

2. Personal relationships must not be oppressive.

We cannot live without connections; they should be our primary source of serenity. However, they often lead to bitterness.

When we find ourselves irritated by others, the first step is to take a deep breath, calm down, and focus on regaining our composure. Imagine observing yourself as if you were an outsider. Whatever is bothering you, hold off on complaining for now. First, calm your mind, and then look for a solution to the issue.

3. Visit places that radiate tranquillity, such as a church, and take a few moments to embrace silence.

This stillness can help you rediscover yourself, organize your thoughts, and enjoy a moment of peace. These moments of calm can be found in simple ways: a trip to church, a walk to work, or a mindful pause in a waiting room.

4. Focus on one task at a time and finish what you've started. We often have numerous responsibilities but struggle to organize and prioritize the most important ones. Completing a task brings a sense of satisfaction that can carry throughout your day.

5. Let go of unnecessary things. One's wealth is measured by what one does not need. When making a purchase, always ask yourself if it can be avoided or postponed and whether it will be truly helpful to you. Every day, we waste and consume mindlessly. Deluded by advertising, we buy products that often end up in the trash, which can also lead to stress.

6. Avoid comparing yourself to others and try to view situations without prejudice. The tendency to compare is a natural aspect of our thought process. We might think, "He's younger than I am and has a quicker career path," or "That person is already married, while I'm still single," and so on. Can one person's happiness truly be compared to another's? Often, we believe that we are superior to some people in certain ways while being inferior to others, which leads to feelings of pride or envy. However, these emotions are not constructive. The only time we should com-

pare ourselves to others is to inspire our own personal growth.

7. Living Gently

The greatest virtue is good manners, which create an atmosphere of peace. It is important to greet others courteously, whether it's someone you haven't seen in a long time or a person you meet every day. Infuse your greeting with genuine happiness at the opportunity to see them.

Be a good listener and engage in conversations while respecting your conversation partner. Strive to be positive and generous; it is rewarding to know that others enjoy your company.

8. Pray.

The peace of mind achieved through contemplation and prayer represents the pinnacle of our emotional well-being. It allows us to connect with the Absolute, assuring us that we are enveloped by a luminous, faithful, reasonable, and compassionate presence. The prayer we offer at the end of each day serves as the foundation for ultimate serenity: "Lord, into your hands I commend my spirit." □



**ST. KATERI
TEKAKWITHA
April 17**

Ian Pinto, sdb

A 'TRIBAL' GIRL

St. Kateri Tekawitha is the first Native American Catholic saint. She belonged to the Mohawk tribe—an indigenous tribe of North America. The Mohawks lived predominantly in Canada but also had presences in the United States. The word 'Mohawk' is a colonial title that the Dutch invaders used to identify this 'tribal' people. In their own language, they identify themselves as *kanién'kehá:ka* which literally translates to 'People of the Flint Stone Place.'

The Mohawks were wealthy traders who dealt primarily with flint, which is a special kind of stone out of which tools and weapons were fashioned. The Mohawks constituted the largest and most powerful Native American tribes. They exercised control over the land up until the 18th century when the invaders with their superior weapons displaced them and in the bargain threatened their very existence.

Kateri was born in the Mohawk village of Ossernenon which lies in present-day New York, in the year 1656. We are not sure of details regarding her birth and early childhood as the Mohawks were not concerned with keeping records. What we are aware of is that she was born to the Mohawk chief, Kenneronkwa and his wife, who remains unnamed in authentic biographies, who was captu-



red from another tribe, the Algonquin, during one of their raids.

Kateri's journey to the altar begins with her mother, who was baptized as a Catholic and received her education from French missionaries who were active in her native village close to present-day Montreal. Her village was raided by the Mohawks and she

was among the women who were captured along with whatever loot they could gather from the far more simple Algonquins. The Mohawks and the Algonquin people were at war for decades but things began to intensify with colonial presences in both camps. The Algonquin were more or less subdued by the French and the missionaries had made considerable progress with catechizing and educating them.

Kateri was the first of two children born to the Mohawk couple. Her younger sibling was a brother. Sadly, Kateri lost her whole family to the smallpox epidemic. She herself was severely afflicted and carried scars of the disease for the remainder of her life. As a four-year old orphan, she was taken in by her father's sister who was the wife of a Clan chief. When she was 11 years old, she encountered 3 Jesuits and was fascinated both by their skin colour as well as by their peculiar preaching. Even though her foster parents were anti-Christian, Kateri was drawn to the message of the Gospel. Incidentally, one of her older step-sisters had become a Catholic earlier. Kateri allowed herself to come under the influence of the Jesuits and made efforts to live according to their teachings.

The Jesuits in their notes describe her as a modest girl who avoided social gatherings possibly because she was self-conscious of her disfigured face – she would usually cover her head and face with a blanket. She became adept at stitching clothes, weaving mats and cooking, the hallmarks of a well-brought-up Mohawk woman. She was pressu-

ried to marry but expressed her aversion for it; she confided in her Jesuit confessor that she intended to dedicate her life to God saying, "I can have no spouse but Jesus."

THE LILY OF THE MOHAWKS

Kateri remained close to the Jesuits during her teenage years. In 1669, when her village was pillaged by the Mohicans, another of the Native American tribes, she along with other girls formed part of a relief team headed by the Jesuit priest, Jean Pierron to tend to the wounded, bury the dead and provide food and water to the needy. She was 13 years old at the time.

By the time she reached the age of 17, her foster mother and aunt had made unsuccessful attempts to get her married. They eventually gave up and Kateri took up a serious study of the catechism in preparation for her baptism once she turned 18. She was baptized on Easter Sunday, April 18, 1676 and was given the name "Catherine" after St. Catherine of Sienna. The name 'Catherine,' is in fact a European equivalent of the indigenous name, Kateri.

After her conversion, Kateri faced ostracization and outright persecution from her own tribe folk. They accused her of sorcery and hurled abuses and stones at her. She received terrible treatment from them and was threatened with death on more than one occasion. Eventually, she ran away to a community in Sault Saint-Louis where other Native American converts were living in peace. Kateri settled in well with the new community and stood out for her devotion and asceticism. She would scatter thorns on her

sleeping mat and pray for the conversion and forgiveness of her relatives. While drawing blood was acceptable in Mohawk religious devotion, Kateri was discouraged by the Jesuits who found it crude and unnecessary, especially since, Kateri was already suffering bodily. When confronted, she boldly declared, "I will willingly abandon this miserable body to hunger and suffering, provided that my soul may have its ordinary nourishment."

Her devotion led her to propose the idea of forming a religious order for Native American people but the Jesuits wouldn't hear of it. Considering the circumstances and the theology of the time, Kateri couldn't fulfil her desire to become a consecrated virgin. However, she lived like one. In fact, Jesuit biographers declare her as the first Native American virgin – a commitment that stands out all the more since virginity was frowned upon by the indigenous tribes folk.

During the Holy Week of 1680, Kateri's health took a turn for the worse. She died on the day before the Easter triduum at the age of 23. Her Jesuit biographer, Fr Chauchetière recorded her final words as, "Jesus, Mary, I love you." A few minutes after her death, her face began to change; the scars gradually disappeared and her skin became fair. A few weeks later, she appeared to her clan-mother, Anastasia Tegonhatsiongo who saw her kneeling at the foot of her mattress, "holding a wooden cross that shone like the

sun." Her close friend, Marie-Thérèse Tegaiaguenta was awoken one night by a knocking sound on the wall and a voice saying to her "I've come to say goodbye; I'm on my way to heaven." On her gravestone is engraved the words: "The fairest flower that ever bloomed among the redmen." She came to be known as the Lily of the Mohawks on account of her chastity and holy life.

Fifty years after her death, the first convent for Native Americans was opened in Mexico. In the 1880s, a petition was made by the American ecclesiastics to allow the veneration of Kateri along with the Jesuit martyrs, Isaac Jogues and René Goupil who were martyred by the Mohawks. The Vatican eventually granted permission and Kateri's process for canonization was opened. She was declared a saint in 2012 by Pope Benedict XVI. There are many miracles attributed to her intercession. She is the patron saint of Ecology.

What stands out in her life is her deep faith and her fortitude in suffering. She stands as a model of hope that suffering far from being destructive can be turned, with a great deal of faith, into a salvific and sanctifying experience. Suffering is part and parcel of human life. How does one approach suffering? Do I resist it as an evil or am I able to discover the cross? The name *Tekakwitha* means 'to set things right; am I the *tekakwitha* of my own life or do I dare to surrender myself to God? Kateri shows us that the way to holiness is through faith and the cross. □



THE LORD IS RISEN

by Dinesh Vasava, sdb

Reading: Read the passage slowly and attentively. Gospel: John 20:1-9

Meditation:

The reflection on the Gospel of John 20:1, shared on Easter Day, invites believers to consider the meaning of Jesus Christ's resurrection. This text connects to the Easter Vigil, where the faithful follow the path of salvation, culminating in the meeting with the Risen Christ. The announcement of Christ's resurrection breaks the darkness of despair, as noted in the *Troparion*: "Christ rose from the dead, and by death he trampled on death, giving life to those who lay in the tombs." This moment symbolizes the shift from death to life, inviting believers to celebrate the new reality of Easter.

On this "first day of the week," the liturgy emphasizes the call to witness the Risen One. This Easter celebration encourages believers to remain rooted in faith and experience a daily resurrection. The reflection highlights three readings that show different

aspects of witnessing paschal faith: the witness that becomes a proclamation (Acts 10:37-43), the testimony that turns into expectation (Col 3:1-4), and the witness nourished by faith (Jn 20:1-9).

In Acts 10:36, Peter's message to Cornelius focuses on the core of the Gospel: peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. Peter shares Jesus' life, emphasizing his goodness and healing, and centres the message on the Paschal Mystery. He highlights three key actions: Jesus was killed, God raised him on the third day, and he was revealed to chosen witnesses. Peter's encounter with the Risen Christ, marked by shared meals, gives authority to his testimony, supporting the claim that Jesus is the judge of the living and the dead.

The Gospel of John 20:1-9 shows three responses to the empty tomb, each reflecting a unique aspect of faith.

Mary Magdalene arrives at the tomb while it is still dark. She displays courage and love despite her fear. Her desire to find Jesus

drives her forward, illustrating how true love compels one to seek the beloved in difficult times.

Peter represents a believer struggling with faith. He recalls his past mistakes but runs to the tomb to reaffirm his faith.

The beloved disciple understands the situation deeply. He recognizes the importance of the empty tomb even before meeting the Risen Christ. He sees that Jesus has conquered death and becomes a witness who shares this hope with others.

Mary, Peter, and the beloved disciple show different ways to encounter the Risen Christ. Mary embodies love, Peter represents a journey of growth, and the beloved disciple understands the divine mystery. Together, they seek transformation through the Risen One.

In conclusion, Mary's love and urgency reveal her devotion. The beloved disciple symbolizes strong faith, believing in the resurrection. The empty tomb stands for hope and new life, symbolizing victory over death.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, on this day of resur-

rection, I thank You for the gift of new life and hope. Help me to seek You with urgency and to believe in the promise of Your resurrection. May I carry this hope into my daily life and share it with others. Amen.

Contemplation:

Spend a few moments in silence, allowing the truth of the resurrection to fill your heart. Visualize the empty tomb and the joy of the resurrection. What emotions arise in you during this time of contemplation?

Action:

Reflect on how you can live out the message of the resurrection this week. Consider sharing the joy of Easter with someone who is struggling or participating in a community service project that embodies the spirit of new life.

Conclusion

As we celebrate Easter Sunday, let us carry the message of the resurrection in our hearts and actions. May we be witnesses to the hope and joy that comes from the empty tomb, sharing this gift with those around us. ☐



Quiet Spaces

ODE TO JOY

Pope Francis' Homily (edited) at Domus Sanctae Marthae on Thursday 15 May 2015

Joy and hope are fundamental traits for Christians. It is disheartening to see a believer lacking joy and clinging to rigid doctrines. This sentiment inspired Pope Francis during Thursday's Mass at Santa Marta, where he acknowledged the Carmelite "Hour of Prayer for Peace." He highlighted that March 28 marks the fifth centenary of St. Teresa of Jesus, Virgin Doctor of the Church, and expressed his support for the initiative to pray for peace, hoping that God's love would extinguish the fires of war and promote dialogue over conflict.

In his homily, the Pope referenced the readings from Genesis and John, focusing on the theme of time and its significance. He emphasized the joy of hope and trust in God's promises, recalling how God assured 99-year-old Abraham that he would be the father of many nations, despite having a son, Ishmael, at that time. God called Abraham to be faithful to the covenant and promised him a lasting legacy, saying, "I give you everything; you will be a father."

Surely, said the Pope, Abraham "was happy about this, was filled with comfort" in hearing the Lord's promise: "Within a year you shall have another son". Of course, in hearing these words, "Abraham laughed, the Bible says afterwards: how, a son at 100 years old?". Yes, "he had begotten Ishmael at 87 years, but at 100 years a son is too much. It was incomprehensible!". Therefore, "he laughed". But "that smile, that laughter was the beginning of Abraham's joy". Here then, the Pope brought back the essence of Jesus' words as the day's central message: "Your father Abraham rejoiced". Indeed, he "didn't dare believe and said to the Lord: 'But if only Ishmael should live in your presence'". To which he received the response, "No, it shall not be Ishmael. It shall be another".

Thus, the Pope stated, Abraham "was joyful" and "a little later his wife Sarah also laughed. She was hiding behind the tent door, listening to what the men were saying". And "when these messengers of God gave Abraham the news about his son, she too laughed". And this really was "the beginning of the great joy of Abraham", Francis said. Yes, "the great joy: he rejoiced in the hope of seeing this day; he saw it and was filled with joy". The Pope recommended that we look to "this beautiful icon: Abraham who was before God, who bowed himself to the earth. He heard this promise and his heart opened to hope and was filled with joy".

This is precisely "what these doctors of the law did not understand", Francis said. "They did not understand the joy of the promise; they didn't understand the joy of hope; they didn't understand the joy of the covenant. They did not understand". And "they didn't know how

to rejoice, for they had lost the sense of joy that only comes from faith". However, the Pope explained, "our father Abraham was able to rejoice because he had faith; he had been made righteous in faith". Meanwhile the doctors of the law "had lost the faith: they were doctors of the law, but without faith!". Moreover: "they had lost the law! Because the centre of law is love, love for God and for neighbour". However, they "had only a system of specific teachings which they refined further every day so that no one would touch them.

They were "men without faith, without laws, attached to doctrines which had even become a casuistic approach". Francis also proposed practical examples: "We can pay taxes to Caesar, can't we? This woman, who was married seven times, when she went to heaven would she be the spouse of those seven?". And "this casuistry was their world: an abstract world, a world without love, a world without faith, a world without hope, a world without trust, a world without God". For this very reason "they were unable to rejoice". They didn't even enjoy themselves at parties, the Pope affirmed, although they surely "uncorked a few bottles when when Jesus was condemned". But they were always "without joy", or moreover, "afraid that one of them, perhaps while drinking" would remember the promise that "He would rise". And thus, "straight away, with fear, they went to the prosecutor to say 'please, be careful with this one, that it isn't a trick". All this was because "they were afraid".

But "this is life without faith in God, without trust in God, without hope in God", the Pope affirmed once again. The life of these men, he added, "who only when they understood that they had been wrong" did they think that the only choice left was to take up stones to throw at Jesus. "Their heart had become stone". Indeed "it is sad to be a believer without joy", Francis explained, "and there is no joy when there is no faith, when there is no hope, when there is no law, but only the prescriptions, the cold doctrine. This is what counts". In contrast, the Pope again proposed "Abraham's joy, that beautiful act of Abraham's laughter" when he heard the promise of having "a son at 100 years"; as well as "Sarah's smile, a smile of hope". This is because "the joy of faith, the joy of the Gospel is the touchstone of a person's faith: without joy that person is not a true believer".

In conclusion, Francis used the very words of Jesus: "Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was glad to see my day; he saw it and was glad". The Pope then asked "the Lord for the grace to rejoice in hope, the grace to be able to see the day of Jesus, when we will be with Him and the grace of joy". □

THE MYSTERY OF LOVE

By Pierluigi Menato, TA/ID

The man stormed out, slamming the door behind him and the loud bang made the glass vibrate, waking the sleeping baby in the cradle. The mother approached her child and tried to rock him gently in hopes of putting him back to sleep, but her efforts failed. As she continued to rock him; she eventually had to take him into her arms, cradling him until he calmed down. Amidst the shimmering surroundings, a joyful and confident smile spread across its face.

Elisa could no longer contain the overwhelming tenderness that swelled in her heart; she held the innocent little body tightly to her chest, trying to push away the anguish caused by her husband's behaviour. His reaction to the news of her new motherhood felt like an unwarranted attack, as if he were blaming her for his own guilt. Anger surged within her; the injustice she felt was hard to bear. She felt isolated, battling against the insurmountable wall her husband had thrown up between them since the birth of little Andrea.

With all her youthful strength and faith in love, she tried to break down the barrier that seemed to grow more impenetrable every day. She didn't understand its origins but sensed the man's disappointment, choosing to ignore its source.

Yet, she was certain of his love for their child. She remembered the joy he had shown at the child's birth the previous year; he had seemed overwhelmed with happiness. Even afterwards, she had

endured the challenges of those first months of life that all parents know well. She often caught him leaning over the cradle, studying the baby's features with an ecstatic expression, believing in those moments that he had achieved a happiness few experience.

However, recently, something had changed in the man. He came home late, was taciturn, and closed himself off emotionally, refusing to acknowledge any affectionate words or calls from her. Although he was always kind to the child, he no longer smiled at her.

The few words he did speak carried a reproachful tone, criticizing things like the bland food, a crease in his trousers, or a forgotten speck of dust. At times, he made harsh remarks, and if he noticed tears in her eyes, he would erupt in anger, banging his fist on the table, regardless of how it might frighten their little one.

She remained silent, partly because she loved him and sensed some pain within him that she felt unable to articulate. She waited patiently, confident that he would eventually feel the need to open up and share his troubles with her. Additionally, her meek nature and the education she received taught her to keep quiet, to suppress her tears, and to smile as soon as a glimmer of sunshine broke through the dark clouds.

Elisa was raised by a step-mother who had a heart of gold but a strong character; she could impose her will with just a look or a word. Her father, while expressive and loving, spent very little time at home. He worked as a repres-



entative for a renowned company and was often away on business.

His frequent absences prompted him to find a second mother for his little girl. While this woman could not replace the affection of Elisa's real mother, she provided the thousand little cares that a child needed at that age. When Gianni entered her life, filling it with dreams and sweetness, she sought to be a loving, tender, and understanding wife. She loved him deeply.

The day of the wedding had been the most beautiful of her life. She felt a deep sense of belonging to the man whom God had sent her, someone she loved as she had never believed possible — perhaps even more than she had loved her father. This immense happiness brought with it an anxiety familiar to anyone who has tasted a small piece of heaven. She found herself questioning in sudden anguish, "But will this last? Will it always be like this? Why am I, of

all people, experiencing so much joy?" It then seemed to her that doubting was an act of mistrust in God, and she settled into that soft joy.

The birth of Andrea had helped to seal that union, which had started so promisingly. But now... what was happening?

She examined herself closely for any faults. Was it a lack of consideration? However, she had to admit honestly that Gianni still felt like he did on the first day; she loved him intensely, with no hint of doubt. Perhaps he no longer loved her. Could all that bitterness stem from the chill she sensed from him? She recalled having

read somewhere that sometimes, without any apparent reason, love simply fades away, leaving a rupture that cannot be healed...

This thought gave her unbearable anguish. She wanted to cast it out as a temptation, but despite herself, it returned and was like a nightmare that made her sleepless, sad, and thoughtful.

When she was confident that a new life was on the threshold, she believed that serenity might return to her home. Instead, the news had been greeted with a sting and resentment toward her that heralded it as a triumph. In her bewilderment, the young woman sought refuge and comfort in Andrea, who seemed to sense her sorrow and had become more caressing, dearer with that desire to say things in his way, with that expression in his mimicry of the love he wanted for his mother.

In the evening, when Gianni returned home, more sombre and closed in on himself than when he

had left in the morning, the woman had no more doubts about what she had suspected. For the first time, faced with a pain that she judged stronger than herself, she wished to die. Then she repented of that desire that meant cowardice, renunciation of the cross that God assigns to each one, and bowed her head submissively.

* * *

The months passed one after another, and Gianni remained harsh and distant. At times, she caught a glimpse of sorrow in his eyes as he watched little Andrea wander around the house while she was more ungainly and weighed down by her condition. Perhaps it was just his own impression, a fleeting nuance that disappeared as quickly as it arose. They lived together like strangers; Andrea's gracefulness did little to ease the furrow in Gianni's brow, despite his insistence that he found joy in life each day. The little fellow clung to life with an arrogance that would have made any father proud.

His attitude toward Andrea was also strange. He would caress the child, unable to imagine life without him, yet he didn't hold the child close to his heart as he once did. Whenever he was about to embrace the baby, something within him seemed to prevent it. Instead, he would abruptly set the child down and lose himself in reading the newspaper or watching television.

Gianni often left the house and wouldn't return until Elisa and the baby were asleep.

The baby was born on a winter night. Andrea anticipated her arrival, and so Gianni had to help

welcome this new life into the world. Despite the pain and the sometimes agonizing wait, there was also an aura of mysterious poetry to the experience. It could make even a cynic feel pensive, humble, and admiring of the woman before him, who appeared transformed not just by pain but by something deep and incomprehensible.

Gianni was gentle with Elisa. He offered her words of encouragement and held her hands for a long time, wanting to give her strength. Yet, Elisa remained in a state of delusion. Despite the pain he caused her, she felt gratitude, and she couldn't help but let out a convulsive sigh when he placed the pink bundle in her arms.

"Are you happy, Elisa? And it's a baby girl, the one you wanted so much!"

"And you, Gianni?"

"Me too, Elisa. We have two beautiful children."

The little one was an unusual baby; she rarely cried, and when she did, her wail seemed to quietly beg for forgiveness for being a bother. At three months old, when she began to smile at her mother and show the first signs of understanding, she slipped away one night, just as quietly as she had arrived, returning to the angels.

During those months, Elisa had little time to focus on Gianni due to her declining health and the relentless housework that consumed her. It was rewarding to see him less gloomy, to notice that his affection was genuine and growing as he became fond of the child. That was all she needed, even if he didn't care much for her, even if it often felt like he didn't see her,

and even if his words and demeanour suggested that he was always angry.

She endured and remained silent, believing that nothing was lost, no matter how deeply her Gianni brooded within himself, as long as he loved children. She stretched herself thin to manage everything, ensuring the household ran smoothly in the way that pleased him most. However, when death cruelly took away their dear little angel, everything around her collapsed.

She felt lost and alone, without any support. With the loss of the strength that had once motivated and driven her, she came to the painful realization that everything was truly over. She longed to lie beside the small grave of her "little girl," wishing to hear nothing more and to forget that life is a relentless struggle without pause.

When Gianni returned, he often found her hunched over the empty cradle, frozen in tearless yet all the more bitter grief. Not even Andrea could fill the void left by the child she could no longer hold, whose eyes had closed forever and would never look at her again. There were times when Andrea's joyful shouts about something that amused him annoyed her, and she wished she could silence him.

She felt almost ashamed of this feeling, which resembled an unexpressed resentment toward Andrea, but her pain had transformed her. If only Gianni had taken her hand, helping her by sharing in her suffering, speaking to her with understanding, and attempting to pull her back from the abyss that was consuming her,

perhaps everything would have been different. Yet, Gianni did not seem to realize the turmoil surrounding him.

He had suffered greatly due to his daughter's death, yet he struggled to understand Andrea's despair. While consolation had come to him in various forms, his wife's attitude seemed absurd and inconceivable to him.

Coldly, he contemplated a solution that, at that moment, also felt like the only option for Elisa: separation. What was he supposed to do with a woman who was no longer herself, living only in the memory of their deceased child? The desire to rebuild his life began to stir in his heart, maturing into concrete plans.

One evening, he discussed his thoughts with Elisa. As was her habit, she listened quietly, nodding in agreement with his complaints about Andrea. Gianni was convinced that Elisa was already resigned to the idea of an inevitable separation. He was taken aback when Elisa asked, "And the woman who will take care of Andrea — is she someone you work with?"

Did she know or was she just implying it? He chose not to answer, preferring silence. Elisa did not press further, but in her heart, she sensed that the wall her husband had built over the months was crumbling, threatening to bury her and their deceased daughter in the ruins. She could feel the turmoil in her weary mind — Gianni hunting her down, intent on taking their child away — that was all that seemed to matter. She had recently acknowledged her shortcomings as a mother; it was true, and she admitted it to herself.



With her sick mind, she ranted day and night. Behold, God was punishing her; she had forgotten she was a creature; she had allowed herself to rise as judge, to blame God's designs. What could she know of what was good or evil? If her child was dead, she had the right to mourn her but not to despair. Now, she could no longer stop the course of events. Gianni would have opened the door of his house to a woman who had tricked him, and Andrea would have been a stranger, an intruder, while she, far away, would have been unable to do anything more for him. He would thus lose both his creatures.

A plan formed in her mind, and during Gianni's absence, she packed a suitcase with essential items. From the drawer, she took some money set aside for emergencies along with her few jewels. She dressed Andrea, who, excited by the preparations, kept asking questions. She intended to leave and spend the upcoming Christmas at her stepmother's house, certain that her stepmother would welcome her and guide her in this new direction. However, she did not want Andrea to see the ruin of her home, a place that belonged

to her alone, now occupied by another woman. She checked the timetable and realized she still had plenty of time. Leaving her suitcase in the anteroom with Andrea by her side, she went to the cemetery for a final farewell to her child.

Tears that she had withheld after the loss flowed freely during what she thought would be her last visit. She cried a long, soft cry as her child tried to comfort her with promises of goodness.

That's how Gianni found her in the midst of all the snow, leaning against the cross with one hand while holding Andrea's hand in the other, as he showered her with kisses.

Something stirred within him. He had experienced a mysterious premonition, sensing that misfortune was about to befall him. Unable to resist the feeling, he returned home a few hours earlier than usual. The empty house and the suitcase in the anteroom brought the reality of the situation to his attention. The thought of losing both his child and the woman he believed he no longer loved shocked him, prompting him to run to the cemetery.

"Elisa!" he called out.

But she was lost in her sea of tears, which would eventually prove beneficial to her, yet at that moment, they seemed overwhelmingly heavy. He called her name even louder, and when she still didn't hear him, he approached her, drawing her close to his sobbing chest. Their tears mingled — tears of repentance, remorse, and promise — while little Andrea clung tightly to their legs. □

FIORETTI OF DON BOSCO - 64

by Michele Molineris

284. I joined my prayers to yours (1881)

I must have been seven or eight years old when my brother Raymond, who was about three years younger than me, fell seriously ill. We were in the countryside and had little experience with doctors and medicine. Fortunately, a doctor — an old family friend, whom we affectionately called the good doctor d'Espiney — quickly responded to my father's urgent call. This doctor had also introduced us to Don Bosco two years earlier. Understanding my father's anguish, especially since he had already lost two young sons, the doctor rushed to the bedside of my dear little brother. After examining Raymond, he immediately declared that he had very serious pneumonia. My father's first thought was to invoke the Help of Christians; he quickly wrote to Valdocco, sharing his sorrows and asking Don Bosco for the support of his prayers.

The saint was not in Turin when the letter was sent, and it did not reach him until several days later. Meanwhile, the boy's illness progressed rapidly and relentlessly. By the eighth day, in the evening, all hope for his recovery was lost; even the doctor believed that the little boy would not survive the night. He was closely monitored, waiting for his last breath.

However, as dawn broke the next day, the boy was still alive. Just after seven o'clock, he suddenly woke from a deep sleep, sat up in his cot, and asked for something to eat. It seemed he had made

a full recovery, thanks to Mary, Help of Christians, who remained at his father's side.

Two days later, a letter with an Italian stamp arrived, delivering a divine message that confirmed the miraculous healing. It was from Don Bosco, dated on the very day of the boy's recovery. It read: "This morning, around seven o'clock, as I was going up to the altar to celebrate Mass, I united my prayers with yours for the recovery of your son." The following year, Don Bosco wished to celebrate the Eucharist, just as he had done before the feast of Mary Help of Christians at Valdocco, in honour of the little boy's healing. (*A.M. de Villeneuve Trans, in B.S., novembre 1929, 296*).

285. Don Bosco takes his revenge (1881)

One day in April 1881, while Don Bosco was among for his audience with prelates and ladies, there took place one of those delightful incidents which he could so cleverly create and lead to a happy conclusion. When a Monsignor, unknown to Don Bosco, came into the room, a gentleman with whom he was conversing told him, "He is the Monsignor Pio Delicati." [To his surprise] Don Bosco found himself face to face with the consultor who had given an unfavourable report about his booklet *St. Peter's Centenary* [which also included the saint's biography].

The Monsignor did not know Don Bosco either, nor could he have imagined that Don Bosco would have discovered the name of the consultor who had been so ruthless in judging his booklet. In fact the Monsignor had seen to it that his name should not appear

on the official report. *Let me get even with him*, Don Bosco said to himself. He walked up to him and greeted him cautiously. In turn, the monsignor asked for his name. "I am just Father John Bosco, from Turin."

"Ah, Father John Bosco!" he exclaimed. "A well-known man and a gifted writer."

"A writer perhaps, but far from gifted."

"You are very modest. Your books do much good."

"It is certainly not my intent to cause any harm. Still, you may have heard of the problem I had with a booklet of mine."

"Which one?" "On the life of St. Peter." "I am surprised to hear that." "And yet, it's true. Some inaccuracies were found and someone even recommended that the work be put on the *Index of Forbidden Books*. This would have been rather funny since I had closely followed Cuccagni and Sanctorius, two famous authors approved by censors of the Holy Office which was no ready to condemn me. I might add that this booklet of mine won a letter of commendation from Pius IX. Fortunately, the Holy Father himself intervened and quashed this controversy."

"Ah, yes, of course... by the way how many boys do you have in your schools?"

"A large enough number, Monsignor. So, as I was saying, *The Life of St. Peter*..."

"Yes, but tell me, now, how many schools do you have?"

Seeing that the monsignor was doing his utmost to squirm out of the embarrassing predicament, Don Bosco talked about his schools. Monsignor Delicati did not in the least let it out that he had been Don Bosco's censor; in turn, Don

Bosco did not pursue the matter, but rather, recommended his boys to him, and respectfully took leave of him. (E.B.M., XV, 121).

286. He found his father through the influence of Don Bosco (1882)

One day in 1882 while Don Bosco was going from Parma to Bologna with Fr Costamagna who had just returned from Argentina. On the train, he found himself in a coach with a gentleman and his son, a seminarian. This man was thinking of placing his daughter at the school of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Nizza Monferrato to prepare herself for her teaching certification. After the usual pleasantries, not knowing Don Bosco, he mentioned his decision on that matter. Meanwhile, the seminarian whose broad face and big eyes spoke of simplicity and goodness, was glancing through *Unità Cattolica*. This prompted Father Costamagna to start a conversation that led him to speak of the Oratory and Don Bosco, ending up with an invitation to the young man to go to Turin and stay with him. The lad fixed his gaze on Don Bosco, seated next to Father Costamagna, and asked, "Is he perhaps Don Bosco?"

"Yes," replied Father Costamagna. "Oh dad," exclaimed the seminarian turning to his father, "the priest you are talking with is Don Bosco!"

"Don Bosco?" exclaimed the father. Immediately, he began talking to him, manifesting his joy at the encounter.

At one point, Don Bosco suddenly asked the young cleric, "Would you also like to come to Turin with Don Bosco?"

"To do what?" "To stay with him." "Why?"

"Because there you would be able to do much good, to work, to teach, to assist the boys and later to preach and teach catechism."

"But I have to continue my seminary studies."

"In Turin you will also have ample opportunity to study. Come, now, decide. There is room also for you."

"But I can't come." "Why not?"

"I would gladly come. I like Don Bosco, but I love my father more and I can't leave him."

The father was listening to this conversation in silence and with some emotion. The train meanwhile had stopped. It was a through train. The gentleman got off for some reason. Moments later, a very long freight train pulled in between the station and the through train, which blew its whistle and began to pull out. The poor man, having his blocked off, could not get to his coach in time. His son was crying out, "Dad, dad!" But it was use useless. Don Bosco said to him, "See? You did not wish to come with Don Bosco, and now you are forced to do so."

The youth burst into tears. "Come, now, calm down," Don Bosco told him. "At the next station you can get off and wait for your father. Father Costamagna will telegraph him that you are waiting there. He will come on the next train, and so you will be together again." And thus it happened. (E.B.M., XVI, 235-236).

287. Good morning, Chevalier (1882)

There is a story behind the Pompeian mosaic floor. Its cost had been estimated at nine thou-

sand lire. One day, while at Sampierdarena, Don Bosco happened to meet Mr [Joseph] Repetto, the owner of a marble quarry in Lavagna, Ligure. He greeted him with the title of Chevalier.

"Don't tease me, Don Bosco," came the reply. "I am not a chevalier, just a plain businessman who does his job as best he can."

"But could not a man in your position use a title to honour to enhance your position before your peers, your workers, your business associates and the social world? Don't you agree?"

"Of course, I would not take offense!"

"Well, look, you have contracted to lay the flooring for the Church of St. John the Evangelist. Could you not do it free of charge and rid me of a worrisome expense? It would be an act of charity in God's eyes. And I promise to obtain a chevalier's cross for you."

"We could manage that," Repetto replied.

"Then, it's a deal," Don Bosco concluded.

On second thought, however, Repetto felt that it was too high a price for a mere honorific title. He manifested his misgivings to Father [Anthony] Sala, who urged him to follow Don Bosco's advice, assuring him that anyone showing generosity to Don Bosco always gained by it. As things turned out, Mr Repetto laid the floor free of charge and got his knightly cross. Some time later, thanks to the Oratory, he was awarded the contract to build a monument to Bishop [Hyacinth] Vera in the Cathedral of Montevideo, which brought him a handsome profit. □



GAZING AT CHRIST WITH MARY

by Giuseppe Pelizza

Pope St. John Paul II's "*Rosarium Virginis Mariae*," invites Christians around the world to rediscover the beauty of contemplating Christ through the lens of Mary. To contemplate means to look deeply, allowing oneself to become what one sees. In this sense, contemplation is the ultimate goal of all Christian life, and the Rosary offers a unique opportunity to focus on Mary while reflecting on Christ.

To achieve a true contemplation of God, one must actively pursue it. There are many paths to this goal, but all should lead towards truth and love. The Rosary is particularly effective, especially when recited daily. With regular practice, it transforms into a habitual opportunity that helps one perceive the mysteries of God. To engage in this prayer authentically, the Pope outlines four stages: we are called to learn about Christ from Mary, to conform ourselves to

Him, to supplicate Him, and to proclaim Him alongside Mary (RVM, 14).

The mediation of Mary has a clear purpose. Just as it is difficult to look directly at the sun because it dazzles our eyes, so too is it challenging to contemplate Christ. One must gradually adjust one's gaze to the brilliance of His light in order to appreciate the beauty that illuminates and captivates. It was by the splendour of Christ's face that Peter, James, and John were profoundly affected on Mount Tabor (cf. Mt 17:2), as was St. Paul on the road to Damascus (cf. Acts 9:3). Ultimately, Mary serves as the perfect model for how to behold the face of Christ—experiencing joy and glory as well as sorrow and death. With her radiant, deep, sorrowful, and passionate gaze, a mother and a disciple, she embraces the life of her Son and our Lord. Her gaze and heart reflect the mysteries of Christ's life, merging into a har-



In every moment of life, Mary remains the model for looking upon the face of Christ and being transformed by it

monious and eternal praise. Through her looks, Mary provided God with a human face and a human body in which He could recognize Himself. By identifying solely with God, Mary also allowed God to recognize Himself in her, embodying all the beauty of His divine nature.

Mary, nourished by God and through her contemplative gaze, infuses her life with the divine

essence of creation. Her gaze goes beyond mere observation; it seeks spiritual intimacy and contemplation that transforms and uplifts. She constantly reflects in her heart on the events of her Son's life, intertwining her entire existence with these memories. Through the Rosary, the Pope reminds us that Mary, through our words, continues to weave the narrative of her "tale" of evangelization (RVM, 11). Following her example, this prayer guides us toward a deeper contemplation of Christ, gradually drawing our hearts closer to hers and immersing us in silent admiration of Christ.

As the first disciple of Jesus, Mary transforms into the most experienced Teacher, allowing herself to be shaped by the Spirit of Christ, her inner Master. To follow Mary means to conform to the Spirit of Jesus on a journey of deeper assimilation. Thus, the school of the Rosary becomes a place of conformity to the Lord: Christ desires to be formed in our hearts, just as He was formed in the heart of Mary, the first believer. Being close to Jesus nurtures a trusting and fervent friendship within us, initially expressed through confident supplication and ultimately manifested in the

proclamation of the Gospel.

The Pope highlights profound insights by introducing the mysteries of Christ's life into the Rosary. When St. Paul uses the term "mystery," he refers to the divine plan of salvation and its fulfillment in the life of Jesus, embodied in the flesh of the Son,



Your eyes, O Mary, have seen infinity, give us the springtime of your gaze and our lives will be renewed.

which was assumed by Mary.

By introducing the five new Mysteries of Light, the Pope em-

phasizes the significance of Christ's daily life—the Word made flesh, in whom "all the fullness of divinity dwells bodily" (Col 2:9). Every moment of Jesus's human life signifies this divine Mystery.

Each event in His life represents the realization of God's plan of salvation, which is the Mystery of God. This Mystery has been made manifest in the world and history, making it fully understandable. However, every event and action in Christ's life continues to reveal the depths of infinite love, remaining unfathomable, as it unfolds in time the immeasurable divine love that surpasses all expectations and hopes.

The Pope states, "The mysteries of Christ are also, in a certain sense, the mysteries of the Mother, even when she is not directly involved in them, because she lives in Him and for Him" (RVM, 18). Therefore, when we recite the Rosary, it is not only we who are praying; Mary is also praying for us and inviting us to focus on the face of her beloved Jesus. □

I Come to Do the Will of God

"Who is Mary?" She is the one who, with her entire being, says, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord" (Luke 1:38). She speaks this way because her existence, from the moment of conception, has been shaped by the grace of the One whom the Prophet referred to as the 'Servant of Yahweh.' This is the One who, upon entering the world, proclaims, "Behold, I come...to do, O Yahweh, thy will" (Hebrews 10:7). He is the Eternal Son of the Father. At the very heart of the struggle between the denial of God and the mission of salvation, "the Son of God" became "the Son of Mary." (Pope St. John Paul II)



MY VOCATION STORY

CL. ALAN MANUEL

Missionary to Tunisia (CNA)

Please introduce yourself

My name is Alan Manuel. I come from a supportive family. I was born in Aurangabad and went to school in Pune. My parents, Andrew and Mary Manuel, have always been my foundation. They guided me with love, wisdom, and faith. Growing up in a Christian family, I enjoyed spending time with my younger brother, Austin. We played together and sometimes argued, just like any siblings. My parents taught me the importance of faith and serving others, providing me with love and valuable lessons.



I started my education at St. Joseph's Boys School in Khadki, Pune, and then moved to Don Bosco Aspirantate in Lonavla. I completed my philosophical studies at Divyadaan in Nashik and earned my B.A., focusing on sociology. This education helped me discover my passions and talents and strengthened my commitment to serve God and others.

2. What do you have to say about your early life?

My early life was a mix of ordinary and extraordinary moments. I grew up in a nurturing environment, surrounded by people who cared about me. I experienced the everyday joys and challenges of childhood, but I always felt a quiet, persistent calling that grew stronger over time. The val-

ues of kindness, service, and faith were instilled in me from a young age, forming the foundation of my character.

Although I never knew what my future held, I always felt that I was meant for something greater than myself. That feeling, often quiet yet persistent, became clearer as I grew older. I was devoted to attending the celebration of the Eucharist at my parish, Holy Cross Dapodi, Pune.

3. How did your vocation come about?

My journey to the priesthood and joining the Salesian community started with a strong feeling being called. I first sensed this call during my first Holy Communion. My parish priest, Fr. L.P. Raj, asked me if I wanted to be a priest. As a child, I said, "YES," and the desire has stayed with me.

After I finished my 10th standard board exams, I shared my wish

to become a priest, even though my father wanted me to study engineering. I was unsure about the next steps, so I asked for advice from a distant relative, Fr. Rosario Vaz. He suggested I attend a vocation camp in Lonavla.

At the camp, I met Fr. McEnroe Lopes and saw how joyful and dedicated the Salesians are in helping young people. The more I spent time with them, the more I felt called to this life of service and faith. Through prayer and reflection, I became sure that I was meant to dedicate my life to God by serving the youth in the Salesian way.

4. What was your Salesian formation like?

My Salesian formation has been a powerful and life-changing journey. It has helped me grow spiritually, learn more, and prepare for ministry. Through this process, I have gained a better understanding of the Salesian spirit, recognized my strengths and weaknesses, and found direction for my service.

Living the Salesian way during my practical training was important. I learned the value of brotherhood, the importance of joy, and the teachings of Don Bosco, especially in my work with young people. My time as an assistant in the pre-novitiate at Loutolim created many cherished memories. I spent time praying and reflecting on *my mission, Ad Gentes*. This experience encouraged me to be creative, think differently, and put others first. Working with the Rathwa tribe in Kawant was enriching; I learned about new cultures as I embraced the Salesian way of life. Although I

mostly interacted with students, I gained important insights from them and cherish those moments.

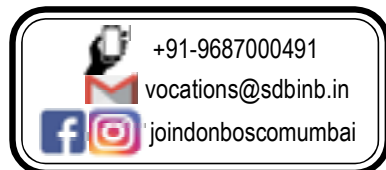
My prayer life, quiet moments before the Blessed Sacrament, personal prayer, retreats, and training in Salesian spirituality – along with the support from my spiritual directors and confessors – have greatly shaped who I am today. This journey has helped me discover God’s plan for me, and I feel grateful to be on this path.

5. What are you most looking forward to?

I am excited about my mission as a missionary in the province of CNA. I will work closely with young people in our communities, helping them discover their potential and guiding them toward lives of faith, hope, and service. I also look forward to growing in my relationship with God and experiencing the challenges and joys of Salesian life.

While I feel nervous about the unknown and the cultural shock I may face, I trust that God will be with me during this mission.

I am eager to continue my learning and growth through study, ministry, and daily life with my Salesian brothers. Each day is an opportunity to live the Gospel more fully, and I am ready to take on that challenge with enthusiasm and trust in God’s plan. □



IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Some more

A stranger approached a very old man: “Excuse me, sir, but, you must be of a very great age.”

“Yes,” replied the old gentleman. “I be gettin’ for ninety five years.”

“And have you lived here all your life?”

“No, not yet,” was the reply.

Irish Spirit

Louis XIV of France had an Irish brigade in his army. Said the king to his commander on one occasion: “I have more trouble with your Irish soldiers than with the whole French army.”

Replied the commander: “The enemy have the same complaint, Sire.”

Here no more

The manager of the chemical works was showing a friend over the factory. “What has become of Joe Smith? He told me some time back you had assumed him.”

“Ah,” said the manager with a sigh. “Poor Joe was rather careless in the use of chemicals...”

He paused and looked up: “Do you see that big patch of discoloration on the ceiling?”

“Yes.”

“Well, that’s Joe.”

That’s Mine

Judge: “You say that man robbed you. Can you point out any of your property among this heap?”

Plaintiff: “Yes, Sir, that handkerchief with B in the corner.”

Judge: “But that is no proof. I

have a handkerchief with ‘B’ in the corner.”

Plaintiff: “Yes, Sir. I am missing two!”

Little Hero

The boy had ventured out on thin ice to help a mate who had fallen in. A group of admirers gathered around him.

“Tell us, my boy,” asked a gentleman, “how could you be so brave as to risk your life for your friends?”

“I had to, sir, he had my skates on!”

Little Souvenir

One of his best friends had died, so a few days after the funeral he visited the widow.

“I have a little request,” said he after condolences. “As you know, Jack and I were very good friends. Is there any small thing I could have as a memento of him?”

The widow looked at him with a big tear-stained face. “How would I do?” she whispered hopefully.

All About Sin

The mother was preparing her boy for his first confession.

But she wanted to make sure he had understood. He answered well all the questions about mortal sin.

“And what about the other sins,” she asked, “the smaller ones, how are they called, - the smaller ones?”

The son puckered his brow in concentration for some time and then brightened and replied: “Those are genial sins!” □

A LETTER FROM GOD

This morning, as you woke up, I watched you and waited for you to speak to me, even just briefly to ask my opinion or to say "thank you" for something nice you experienced yesterday.

But, I noticed that you were very busy looking for clothes to wear to work and searching for your car keys. I kept waiting as you moved around the house, making breakfast and giving your hair a final tug (as you may have heard, I know exactly how much you do that). I hoped you would find a few minutes to stop and say "hi," but you were so pre-occupied.

So, I lit up the sky for you, filling it with colours, sweet bird songs, and a crisp breeze. But you didn't even notice.

I watched you hurry to work, looking a bit nervous, and I waited patiently all day. With all your tasks, I figured you were too busy to tell me anything. When you came home, I

could see how exhausted you were, so I sent a little drizzle of rain hoping it would wash away your stress.

I thought that might make you happy and that you would think of me, but instead, you got upset and cursed. I longed for you to talk to me; it wouldn't have taken long at all.

Then you turned on the computer. I waited patiently while you watched TV while



having your dinner, but once again, you forgot to speak to me.

I noticed you were tired. I understood your silence, so I dimmed the splendour of the sky. However, I did not leave you in the dark; I transformed it into a dazzling pinwheel of stars, even though you didn't seem to care.

By the time you fell asleep, you were exhausted. After saying "goodnight" to your loved ones, you hurried to your room and quickly fell asleep.

I watch over my children's sleep and rock their dreams because I am always there for them, even if they don't realize it.

I have more patience than you can imagine. I hope this teaches you how much patience one ought to have with others.

I have done for you everything that you enjoy.

I love you very much, and I await your prayers every day.

Have a good day!

You are getting up again, and I will wait for you to give me a moment.

My love will not abandon you, even for a moment.

Your friend, God!

A man found himself lost in the desert. Later, while recounting his harrowing experience to his friends, he explained how, in his despair, he knelt down and called out for God's help. "Did God answer your prayer?" they asked him. "Oh, no! Before He could, a scout arrived and showed me the way." □

LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

My grateful thanks to Jesus, in the Blessed Sacrament, Mama Mary, St Joseph and all the saints for the many blessings bestowed on our family through the recitation of the three hail Marys. We thank Mama Mary for the safe delivery of our daughter and our daughter-in-law and for blessing us with three beautiful grand children.

Mrs Mabel D'Cunha, Mumbai

POPE'S WORLDWIDE PRAYER NETWORK APRIL 2025

For the use of the new technologies

Let us pray that the use of the new technologies will not replace human relationships, will respect the dignity of the person and will help us faces the crises of our times.

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THE IDEAL OF REDEEMED HUMANITY

The success of the Holy Year relies on her support, and we need her help and prayers. To achieve the real purpose of our upcoming spiritual event, we should organize a special devotion to the Virgin Mary. She exemplifies not only the redeemed creature through the merits of Christ but also represents humanity on its journey of faith. St. Ambrose refers to her as the figure of the Church, while St. Augustine presents her to the Catechumens as the "figure in the sanctae Ecclesiae." By focusing our attention on Mary, the blessed one, we can reshape within ourselves the form and structure of a renewed Church.

St. Paul VI, May 30, 1973

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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