

CONTENTS

From The Editor's Desk: <i>Promise and Joy.....</i>	3
Honour Your Father and Mother - <i>Ian Pinto, sdb.....</i>	4
Youth on the Move: Lower the Mountains, Fill up the Valleys - <i>Gianni Palizzi.....</i>	8
Salesian Saint: Bl Stephen Sandor.....	10
Witnesses In And For Our Times: St. Francis Xavier.....	13
Lectio Divina: Prepare the Way, The Grand Welcome - <i>Ian Pinto, sdb.....</i>	16
Quietspaces: Awaiting the Birth - <i>Pope Francis.....</i>	18
The Blind Shall See - <i>Fr. Ian Doulton's Collection</i>	20
Facets of His Life: A Sense of Duty - <i>Natale Cerrato.....</i>	24
Reflecting on Mary: That Night in Bethlehem - <i>Lorenzo Bortolin.....</i>	28
NewsBits.....	31
Night - <i>Stefano Ugolini.....</i>	34
<i>In a Cheerful Mood.....</i>	32
<i>The Devotion of the Three Hail Marys.....</i>	33
<i>They Are Grateful to Our Lady & Don Bosco.....</i>	33
<i>Thanks to Dear St. Dominic Savio.....</i>	33



*Sincere good wishes
to our readers and friends
around the world.
May your Christmas
be full of joy, happiness and
prayerful adoration.
May you be united with
your family and friends.
May you feel the warmth
of Christ's presence among
you and experience
some of the happiness
Joseph and Mary
felt on the night
that Jesus was born.*

With love
from all of us at the Shrine Office
of Don Bosco's Madonna

From The Editor's Desk

PROMISE AND JOY

"The implications of the name Emmanuel are both comforting and unsettling; comforting, because He has come to share the danger as well as the drudgery of our everyday lives. He desires to weep with us and to wipe away our tears. Amid what seems most bizarre, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, longs to share in and to be the source of the laughter and the joy we all too rarely know." Michael Card

One of the best loved and most comforting things about Christmas is that it is the same every year - we sing the same carols, we put up the old decorations, we attend Midnight Mass or some kind of Christmas service, and we hear the old familiar stories: shepherds in the fields who witnessed a vision of angels, Mary and Joseph finding "no room at the inn" and, of course, the miraculous birth of the Christ Child. In many ways Christmas is ever the same, comfortably predictable. We like it that way because we can only handle the predictable; it's comfortable.

I remember speaking to a young lady who frequented the shrine for some years before she was married, and this was what she told me once, speaking of the birth of her first child:

"In the months before the birth of our first child, I did a great deal of reading. I metaphorically devoured books on baby care, early child development, and parenting. I thought that I was ready. How naïve I was! Nothing can prepare you for that moment, the birth of a child, your child. I assumed all of my careful preparations had equipped me to welcome a new person into our family and that I could adapt my life accordingly. In reality, the birth of our daughter took us over the border into a new land, a new country. Our lives were turned upside down, and our old life before this birth was simply that: 'our old life.'"

We believe that Christmas will always be the same, and we try to make Christmas predictable, but it is not! The birth of the Christ Child changed everything - all of our old assumptions, all of our old values and former ways of looking at the world were swept away in this one, single act of love. Every year we try to prepare for this life-changing event by decorating, singing carols, sending cards, sharing with family and friends, but nothing can really prepare us for the birth of Jesus: his birth into our world, into our lives, and into our hearts. All we can do is to receive him with gratitude and humility at every Christmas.

And so: May the birth of our Lord Jesus fill all the dark places of your lives with light! And I wish you and those you love a blessed and joy-filled Christmas.

Fr. Ian Doulton sdb

"HONOUR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER"

By Ian Pinto, sdb

There is a touching story told of the famous Dr. Samuel Johnson. Samuel's father, Michael Johnson, was a poor bookseller in Lichfield, England. On market days he used to carry a package of books to the village of Uttoxeter, and sell them from a stall in the marketplace. One day the bookseller was sick, and asked his son to go and sell the books in his place. Samuel refused to obey as he felt that it was an undignified task for an educated child like himself.

Fifty years later, Johnson became a celebrated author, the compiler of the English Dictionary, and one of the most distinguished scholars in England; but he never forgot his act of unkindness to his poor, hard-working father. So when he visited Uttoxeter, he was determined to show his sorrow and repentance. He went into the marketplace at the time of business, uncovered his head, and stood there for an hour in the pouring rain, on the very spot where the bookstall used to stand. "This," he says, "was an act of contrition for my disobedience to my kind father."

After the three basic commandments concerning the just relationship between man and God, in the commandment to honour one's father and mother, the Decalogue contemplates at once the whole gamut of filial relations. It captures concisely the spirit of filial relation and

obligations in that one phrase: "Honour your father and mother". This commandment, even while concerning first and foremost one's own parents, can and must include more broadly any physical, moral, intellectual, or spiritual authority to which a person owes credit for his/her being.

What does it mean to honour one's father and mother? The verb "to honour" or *timao*, in Greek, is a term whose importance we cannot underestimate, since it applies not only to the form of relations between a person and his/her parents and to his/her superiors in a hierarchy, but also to the relationship between a person and God. To honour a person means to give him/her a place of honour and to do him/her honour (not just verbally). To give a place of honour means, firstly, to have a great esteem for him/her and also to bear witness to the consideration and respect he/she deserves.

The Greek verb meaning "to honour" likewise means "to reward", "to give thanks". Therefore, honouring someone would also mean showing gratitude to that person for all that he/she has done either to oneself or to a larger entity. This is a vital component of the fourth commandment. Children may never completely understand the love of parents until they become par-

ents themselves. It is not easy to be parents, not by a long shot. The amount of sacrifice, pain, trouble and heartache that one must go through just so that one's bundle of joy turns out to be just that 'a bundle of joy' to the world, is daunting and so, commendable.

There is that famous story of an 85 year old man who sat on his chair by the window while his young, educated son busied himself reading the newspaper. A crow happened to sit on the window sill and the father asked the son, "What is that?" The son replied, "That's a crow, dad." A few seconds later, the father asked again, "What is that?" Again, the son said, "That's a crow." Hardly a minute went by before the father's voice was heard again inquiring, "What is that?" The son's patience grew thin and he burst out, "Can't you see, that's a crow! A crow, dad!" On seeing the son's reaction the father pulled himself up from the chair with difficulty and hobbled into his room. From a drawer he pulled out a dusty old notebook and brought it to his son. "Will you read the page that is bookmarked with your childhood photograph?" he quietly asked. His son began reading, "Today is my son's fourth birthday. We were enjoying the morning, playing together on the couch when a crow perched itself on the window ledge. My son was curious and asked me, 'What is that?' I answered, 'That is a crow, son.' Again my son asked, 'What is that?' Again I answered, 'That is a crow, son.' Again and again my



son repeated the question; he asked me the same question 23 times. Each time I gave him the same response along with a tender hug and a kiss. I didn't get irritated or upset that he asked me the same thing 23 times. After all, he is my son and I love him. On reading this, tears gushed forth from the son's eyes.

This heart-rending story makes a strong point. Parenting is no laughing matter. There are definitely moments of great joy, success and satisfaction but they are often preceded and even anteceded by tough and trying moments. Honouring our father and mother consists much less in showering them with particular acts of deference or gratitude than in living our lives as men and women in all that they have that is beautiful, good, true, and great: such a thing could not help but incite joy and inner pride in those who have given us life and the capacity to make of it what we wished. This is perhaps the best way we can show honour to our parents and is the best gift we can give to them.

St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians notes that the fourth commandment is the "first com-



mandment accompanied by a promise" (Eph 6:2). The two versions of the Decalogue contained in the Old Testament, in effect, with very slight differences, consist of the same promise: We read in the book of Exodus, "Honour your father and your mother, so that YHWH your Elohim will give you a long life on earth" (Ex 20:5); and in Deuteronomy, "Honour your father and your mother, as YHWH your Elohim has commanded you, so that you may have a long life and prosperity in the land which the YHWH your Elohim is giving you: (Deut 5:16). This second version has the merit of better emphasizing its essential aspects: first, the fact that what is at stake is not a human commandment but a commandment of God; and also the triple promise that entails its faithful observance. To the one who honours his mother and father, God promises, "a long life and prosperity". These two promises are intimately connected to the third which modifies them and confers on them a new, fuller meaning: the promise of the land that God himself would give.

The land referred to here is not simply soil in the empirical sense or a new country but refers to the land promised by God to humanity: Heaven. Far from being

a fantasy or myth, heaven represents the very reality of God, as the first words of the prayer of Jesus suggest: "Our Father, who art in heaven." Heaven is the "place" where the will of the Father is perfectly done, his kingdom is perfectly come, and his name is truly hallowed, for which this earth, can do nothing but desire and pray: may it be "on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt 6:9-10).

Jesus once made reference to the fourth commandment when the Pharisees reproached his disciples for not observing the tradition of the elders, because they did not wash their hands before eating. "It is with good reason", he told them, "that Isaiah prophesied about you hypocrites: 'These people honour me with their lips but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrine human precepts. You disregard God's commandment but cling to human tradition.' And Jesus went on to say: "How well you have set aside the commandment of God in order to uphold your tradition! For Moses said, 'Honour your father and your mother,' and 'Whoever curses his father or mother shall die.' Yet you say, if a person says to his father or mother, 'Any support you might have had from me is *korban* (meaning, dedicated to God), you allow him to do nothing more for his father or mother, thus nullifying the word of God in favour of your tradition..." (Mk 7:6-13).

For Jesus, the commandment to honour one's father and mother does not reduce itself to empty words. It implies every-

thing contained in the love of neighbour. This is a commandment of God. Religious in its roots, divine in its origin, it explains to man how the true worship God expects from him is in large part, identical to the love with which God loves man and asks him to love his neighbour. You wish to honour me other than with words; you wish to draw your heart closer to my own, God says to man, well then, love your father and mother, assist them as I myself love them and would wish to assist them.

I will conclude with five simple and practical things all of us can do to honour the fourth commandment, borrowing from Tim Challies who says:

1) Forgive them: There are no perfect parents. They have made unwise decisions, have had unrealistic expectations, have said and done things that have left us deeply wounded. Jesus shows us that it is possible to forgive even those who have hurt us deeply when he forgave all those who had a part in his gruesome murder.

2) Speak well of them: There is no virtue in speaking ill of others. Some people have the wrong notion that speaking ill about someone might change the person or at least help one cope with the other's behaviour. This is absolutely untrue. We need to speak well of our parents while they are alive and even after they have died.

3) Esteem them publicly and privately: Parents long to see

how they have impacted their children, how their children are a reflection of their strengths, their values. We often fail to realize how important it is to give them credit for what we have received from them. A simple, "You know, everything I really learned about generosity and kindness especially towards the less-fortunate, I learned from you", can make a parent's day.

4) Seek their wisdom: We honour our parents when we seek their wisdom through life's ups and downs. The Bible constantly associates youth with folly and age with wisdom (Prov 20:29; Job 12:12) and tells us that those who have lived longer lives have generally accumulated greater wisdom. We do well, then, to lean on them for understanding and to seek their input when faced with major decisions.

5) Support them: Financing their health and other requirements is one of the basic ways of supporting our parents. Besides, we also need to support them with our love and care. When we are young we gain strength and long for independence. Our parents raise us to be strong and free! But there is a trade-off here, a passing of the baton, for as our parents age they become feeble, they begin to lose their independence. We honour them by giving them the assurance that we will not forsake them in their old age. Just as they cared for us and provided for all our needs, we ought to do the same for them. This is our responsibility. □

LOWER THE MOUNTAINS, FILL UP THE VALLEYS

by Gianni Palizzi

Called to be Neighbours

The Prophet Baruch (5,7) says: "God has resolved to bring low every high mountain and the everlasting hills, to fill up the valleys and level out the land in order that Israel may walk in safety under the Glory of God." Then the Evangelist Luke (3, 4-6) quoting Isaiah goes on, "A voice of one crying in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his path straight. The valleys will be filled and the mountains and hills made low. Everything crooked will be made straight and the rough paths smooth and all mankind will see the salvation of God!" And so John the Baptist enters the scene.

WHAT MUST WE DO?

It sounds so contradictory; Baruch says "the Lord will do it" but Isaiah asks the people themselves to prepare a way for the Lord. Actually they are not contradictory but complementary. Baruch emphasizes the irresistible struggle of God, like a lost lover bringing his people back from slavery. There's no obstacle too high to prevent the Lover

from reaching his beloved. Isaiah instead emphasizes the part of the lost lover who cannot risk wasting time; he will do anything to facilitate their meeting even though the lover's release is assured. Therefore, the removal of every obstacle that might hinder a heart to heart encounter is urgent.

FILL THE VALLEYS AND LEVEL THE HILLS

Luke emphasizes: "Every valley will be filled, every mountain and hill be made low and all mankind shall see the salvation of God." The valleys, the mountains, the hills and the winding paths will be straightened or flattened are obviously not to be seen in literal terms but as symbols of a deeper reality. Mountains and hills represent the pride and the arrogance of those who think they are better than the God they say they worship, making themselves his spokesperson, committing themselves to dominate others. The arrogant often ask: "Why does God allow this? It's so unfair!" It's a huge

mountain that does not allow them to approach the God who loves us first. Instead, the humble ask: "What is God telling me through these events? How can I meet him by removing anything that permits violence, death, oppression and exploitation?" I am thinking of the presumption of the Pharisee who boasts and who is judging the publican who is beating his breast! "Let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant" (Lk 22:26).

FILL UP THE VALLEYS AND STRAIGHTEN THE WINDING PATHS

The economic inequities that the prophets continually denounce, remind us of the accusation that Jesus levels at the rich (remember the story of the camel passing through the eye of a needle?). Jesus is always with the poor, the women, the children, the sinners, that is how he invites us to fill up the valleys. But what about the tricks we invent by making foolish choices and hiding behind excuses like: "What's wrong?" Or "Everybody's doing it!" Or just

tifying unjust situations blaming God and accusing him of sending us disease (better to them, not us) to test their faith or as an expiation for this sins. What kind of God is this? How can we ever invent such obstacles and such crooked ways to keep God away from us, creating for ourselves a God in our likeness?

BE CONVERTED AND BELIEVE IN THE GOSPEL

It is necessary that conversion be radical. The verbs that the Baptist uses seem like an injunction, a categorical imperative. But God is greater than our verbs. Even after saving us he is willing to do anything for us. "Every valley will be filled, every mountain and hill will be made low; the winding streets will be straightened," which means, let's face it with joy! More than an order it's a promise that becomes a challenge to God who will bring it about even if for men it seems like a mirage ("nothing changes ...it only gets worse"). The Messiah who comes is the fulfilment of the promise and that the Kingdom of God is getting started. □

Happy Christmas!



SALESIAN SAINTS

STEPHEN SANDOR 1914 - 1953

*Salesian Coadjutor,
Martyr, Blessed*

There was a whole line of Hungarian martyrs whose blood was shed for the Faith during the totalitarian regime that was violently established under the directives of the Bolshevik government immediately after the Second World War. Among them was Stephen Sándor who was a victim of the strong anti-religious repression of that Communist regime in Hungary which was particularly harsh and bloody from 1946-1963.

Stephen was born at Szolnok in Hungary on October 26, 1914 to Stephen and Maria Fekete, the first of three brothers. His father was an employee of the State railways while his mother was a housewife. Both parents passed on to their children a deep religious fervour. Stephen studied in his hometown and earned a diploma in technical metallurgy. As a boy he was esteemed by his companions; a cheerful, generous and kind lad. He helped his little brothers to study and to pray first by his example. When he received his Confirmation he pledged to imitate his patron saint and St. Peter. He served daily Mass at the parish church that was run by the Franciscans



and received Communion everyday.

He came to know Don Bosco by reading the *Salesian Bulletin* and felt immediately drawn to the Salesian charism. He expressed his desire to enter the Salesian Congregation to his spiritual director and to his parents. At first his parents denied him their permission but Stephen was eventually able to convince them and in 1936 he was accepted to the *Clarisseum*, the Salesian house in Budapest where he was an aspirant for two years. He attended courses in print technology at the "Don Bosco" Technical Institute. Then he began his novitiate which he had to interrupt on account of military service.

In 1939 he was definitively released from the army and returned to complete a year of novitiate after which he made his

first profession on September 8, 1940 as a Salesian Coadjutor. He was sent to the *Clarisseum* where he enthusiastically undertook to teach the boys professional courses. He was also in charge of assistance at the Oratory which he conducted efficiently and with enthusiasm. He introduced the movement of Young Catholic Workers and his group was recognized as the best in the movement. Following the example of Don Bosco he became a model educator. In 1942 he was called to the front at the River Don in Russia and there he earned a silver medal for valour. The trenches were for him the Festive Oratory where in true Salesian fashion he animated his military colleagues. At the end of the Second World War he committed himself to the material and moral reconstruction of society dedicating himself to serving the poorest youngsters whom he gathered around him by teaching them a trade. On July 24, 1946 he made his perpetual profession as a Salesian Coadjutor and in 1948 he earned the title of master-printer. At the end of their studies his students were hired by the best printing houses in the capital and in the nation.

In 1949, Hungary under Matyas Rakosi confiscated Congregations while an initial persecution was carried out against all the representatives of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and Christians opposed to the new regime.

Even Stephen had to "disappear" leaving his printing press but instead of escaping abroad he decided to stay in his homeland



Beatification of Sándor

to serve the Hungarian youth. When he was surprised (by the police) while trying to save his printing machines he had to flee quickly and remain hidden for several months. Later, under an assumed name, he was able to get a job in a factory making detergents in the capital. While there he fearlessly continued his apostolate clandestinely knowing that it was strictly prohibited. He regularly met his former pupils and some of their friends, taking care of their spiritual and academic needs. They were preparing to resist the anti-clerical propaganda of the regime while others were being helped to grow in their faith. In July 1952 he was captured and his confreres never saw him again. According to the systems of the time he was subjected to inhuman interrogations, ferocious

torture and typical brainwashing to get him to admit to absurd and false accusations made against him which were: participation in conspiracies against the democratic order, high treason, activities against the state and other crimes that all warranted the death penalty. An official document certified the trial and the death sentence. His execution by hanging took place on June 8, 1953. Stephen was a witness to Christ to the last even though they often kept flogging him. His fellow prisoners testified that even after he was informed of his death sentence his face radiated peace while he helped others to keep the faith.

Reconstructing the biographical profile of Stephen Sándor

there emerges a real and profound journey of faith that began in his childhood and continued through his adolescence and which was strengthened by his Salesian Religious Profession and consolidated by his exemplary life as a Salesian Brother. One notices a genuine vocation to the consecrated life, motivated by the spirit of Don Bosco; an intense and fervent zeal for the salvation of souls especially those of the young. Even during his most difficult periods such as his military service and the experience of war, the religious and moral tenor of the young coadjutor was unaffected. It was thus that Stephen Sándor would suffer martyrdom without second thoughts or hesitation. □



Stephen Sándor with his group of altar boys

PRAYER

Almighty God, you called **Blessed Stephen Sándor** to be a member of the great family of St. John Bosco. Through Mary Help of Christians you guided him in his difficult mission for the salvation of souls and in the sacrifice of his life for Hungarian Youth. He bore witness to you during the period of persecution of the Church; he promoted the Catholic press, service at the altar and the education of youth. Through his faithful and loyal spirit he shows us also the way of goodness and justice. We ask you to grant us the grace we implore through his intercession. Through Christ our Lord Amen.

Witnesses in & for Our Times

**ST. FRANCIS XAVIER
(1506-1552)
(DECEMBER 3)**

Fr. Mario Scudr



St. Francis Xavier worked as a missionary for ten years, sensibly and with absolute dedication to the name of Jesus, to earn a raft of titles including Patron of the Work of the Propagation of the Faith (1904) and the Patron of the Missions (in 1927 together with St. Theres of the Child Jesus, who never went to the missions). But as far back as 1748 he had been declared the Patron of the Missions and the Orient. He is one of the greatest figures of the 1500s and of the Church in modern times. But who was Francis Xavier?

He was born at the castle of Xavier in Northern Spain in 1506 the sixth child of Maria and Juan de Jassu who had studied in Bologna and at that time he was the President of the Royal Council of Navarre. He came from a noble family. But even as a child Francis knew the pain of losing his father. After joining the seminary at Pamplona, in 1525 he went to Paris to continue his studies. Paris in those days had one of the most famous European universities (together with Bologna, Salamanca, Oxford Padua and others). The



city attracted students from all over Europe.

In 1530 Francis received a "Magister Artium", a Master of Arts which today means he graduated in literature. He began teaching because he was interested in an academic career. At the College of St. Barbara where he lived he met Ignatius of Loyola, another Spaniard who had come to Paris to study. The meeting was designed by Providence and would prove decisive in his life. He himself would later write in a letter: "What a grace had been given me by Our Lord in meeting Master Ignatius." He was 15 years

older than Francis, more mature and further ahead in his spiritual journey; and he had already given his life over to Jesus Christ.

After long conversations with Ignatius, in 1533 Francis was definitely "converted" to Christ.

He was ordained a priest in Venice in 1537 and after working for a while in the cities of Vicenza and Bologna he became the secretary of Ignatius of Loyola for two years, '39-'40. Then there came a radical turning point which would change his life forever. In 1540 Francis enthusiastically accepted to take the place of a departing missionary who had fallen ill. Pope Paul III appointed him the Apostolic Nuncio of the Indies

Among the pearl fishers

The 1500s was a century of great navigators. The discovery of America by the great Genoese, Christopher Columbus in 1492 awakened much enthusiasm. Francis Xavier participated in this adventurous spirit like so many seamen of that century. For him the seas and oceans were never barriers to the unknown to be feared. They were open highways. A true citizen of the modern age he would not accept limitations to progress. But his goal was not the newly discovered gold or silver in the New World; he faced the storms and waves only so that he might encounter other peoples, ignoring boundaries and barriers of race and language or culture. Everyone had the right to hear the Christian News and he was its messenger. Nothing or no one was too far or too diverse.

In May of 1542 he was in Goa the capital of the Portuguese colonies of the East. Those would be

months of intense pastoral activity in the formation of indigenous clergy. For a while he became a professor once more but deep in his heart he realised that this was not his task or his destiny.

His first missionary endeavour was on the southern coasts of the Indian subcontinent and on the island of Ceylon. He worked fervently and with love among the pearl fishers who had been recently converted but were deprived of any pastoral care. They belonged to one of the lowest castes in India. Francis learned the language, Tamil, instructed them by writing a catechism for them and defended them politically from those who threatened them.

Francis did not establish himself permanently in any mission territory. A bit like St. Paul, his great model, he had to begin the most difficult task: to sow the seed of the Gospel, others would nurture it and help it grow and still others would gather in the harvest. He personally wanted to get to know all of Asia so as to inform the Pope about this new world.

In order to realize this missionary enterprise God would design for him another providential encounter. This too would have a decisive impact on his work of evangelization.

"The Japanese love to listen to godly messages"

Towards the middle of 1547 Francis Xavier met an indomitable seaman in the city of Malacca. He was called Yajiro an ex pirate. An interesting detail: he was Japanese. He gave Francis a beautiful description of Cipangu which means Japan. Yajiro spoke of his countrymen as very cultured

people, eager to learn and interested in religious subjects. Francis listened to this and already dreamed of his new field of work. He wanted to respond quickly to this desire of the Japanese to know "new things about God."

In fact, he arrived on August 15th 1549, precisely at Kagoshima with another missionary companion and Yajiro who by this time had received baptism taking the name of Paul of the Holy Faith, he would be Francis' interpreter. His first approach with his new friend to bring Christ to them was not easy. Francis found that the country was prey to struggles between great feudal lords and landowners and the reigning imperial power.

The problem with the language immediately surfaced. Soon the fruits of conversion began to be seen and they were abundant and consoling. Francis himself wrote back to the Jesuits in Goa a beautiful eulogy on the Japanese of that time: "The people we have spoken to so far are the best I've ever met and I believe that among the unbelievers I have never found any like the Japanese. They are sober in eating; many can read and write; they have only one wife; a few are thieves; they love to listen to the things of God."

The Opposition of the Buddhist Clergy

In the meantime opposition to his preaching was growing among the Buddhist Clergy. He looked for another way to overcome their resistance. He aimed high, very high, the emperor himself. He wanted permission to preach to the Emperor himself. But here he made a mistake: the humble as-

pect of the missionaries, their way of dressing aroused disdain among the people as a result the emperor refused to receive them.

At the second meeting Francis and his friends presented themselves appropriately dressed bringing the emperor gifts from Europe. He obtained permission to preach freely and make conversions.

In Japan Francis baptized more than a thousand people. He succeeded in forming good communities of Christians, compact and incorporating all social classes.

But more and more often objections surfaced when Francis presented Christianity as the truth in the religious field, superior to the other religions known to the Japanese. But they said to him: If truthfully Christianity is true, then why don't they know about it in China? For the Japanese in those days, China was an advanced country, advanced in everything, from scientific discoveries to the latest fashions. And so Francis who knew logic well, immediately decided to leave for China. Christianize China in Asia, and there would be no more problems.

It is really true that man proposes and God disposes. Francis left Japan to return to Goa and there to prepare for his trip to China. After several difficulties and accompanied by a solitary companion a Chinese and a Christian, afflicted by high fever he died on the island of Sancian, right there at the coast of China. It was the year 1552 and he was just 46 years old. His dream had faded but soon others, following in his footsteps and in his memory, would take up the idea and realize his dream. □



PREPARE THE WAY THE GRAND WELCOME

Ian Pinto, sdb

The season of Advent is upon us. The Church invites us to shift gears and go into preparation mode. Advent is essentially a season of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus at Christmas as well as the return of Jesus at the second coming. The term Advent comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which has an interesting gamut of possible meanings. *Adventus* is a form of the verb *advenio* which is defined not only as ‘arrive, come to’, but also as ‘develop, set in, and arise’. *Adventus* itself also refers to an ‘invasion, incursion, ripening, and appearance’ – all denotations that are rich with implications for the gospel accounts of Christ.

The word *adventus* has a military background in as much as it was used to describe arrivals. In ancient Rome, *Adventus* was a technical term for the ‘glorious entry’ of an emperor into his capital city. Usually this fol-

lowed a military victory. Besides celebrating good military prowess on the battlefield, the birthday of the royal leader was also commemorated in an *Adventus*.

Advent then is a most fitting word to describe the period leading up to Christmas. For what we celebrate is the coming of a king, an emperor, one who was both fully man and fully God. The Church drives this point home for us in setting the Feast of Christ the King right before the start of Advent.

This King of ours whom we joyfully paraded on the feast of Christ the King has come with victory. He has broken the shackles of sin and has freed us from the hands of the Evil One. He rode triumphant into battle and conquered sin and death in one humbling and selfless act – death on a cross. At the time, it didn’t seem like a victory at all! Till today many doubt its value but for those who stand redeemed and believe with all their hearts that the blood of Christ has set them

free will testify to the glory of His name. They will sing the praises of the Lamb who was willingly led to the slaughter just so that His beloved people could be free from eternal damnation.

Such is the greatness of our King that he doesn’t hold power and wield authority over others – lordling over them with His mighty hand, but shares His power with His subjects. “For you were slain and by your blood you purchased for God people of every race, language and nation; and you made them a kingdom and priests for our God and they shall reign over the land” (Rev 5:9). As if it wasn’t enough that he redeemed His subjects and brought them together under one banner of the cross, He also gave them power to reign over the land, meaning He gave them freedom but left the use of that freedom to them. He never forces anyone to accept Him or His authority but offers it as a gratuitous gift. Truly, one can never find such a King anywhere on earth.

THE ROYAL PREPARATION

Advent is a call to prepare the way for the King. One can’t just sit around idle waiting for the King to come. That would be quite absurd! The King is returning to His city and a feast is due and therefore preparations are in order. To help us prepare for the coming of the King we have a “voice crying out in the wilderness, ‘prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight’” (Lk 2:4). The voice of John is the voice of someone with concern for the King and His people. He

invites the people to prepare themselves for the coming of the King. He is like the sentry atop a watch tower who glimpses the silhouette of the King on the horizon and who comes running through the streets to announce the imminent royal arrival.

John knew well that the Messiah was King not in the political sense and hence he didn’t call people to arms but to turn away from their sins. He reproached the Pharisees, scribes, lawyers and others who wielded their authority in unrighteous ways and who lived hypocritical lives. But he didn’t stop at reproaching those who required it, he also encouraged others to live upright and holy lives. When he was asked by common folk, what had to be done to prepare the way of the Lord, he said plainly, “If you have two coats, give one to the person who has none; and if you have food, do the same” (Lk 3:10-11). He illustrated a simple lifestyle that involved generous giving, honest dealing and upright living with the intention of helping people fill up the valleys of their lives and ready a straight highway for the King to march triumphantly into the city, that is, their heart.

John’s teaching soothes as it cuts, and heals as it scars. His message is direct and blunt. He doesn’t mince words and nor does he hesitate to say to the hard of heart, “the axe is laid at the root of the tree and every tree that fails to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire” (Lk 3:9). The King is coming; prepare the way! □

Quiet Spaces

AWAITING THE BIRTH

On the morning of Monday, December 23, 2013, the Holy Father celebrated Mass in the Chapel of Domus Sanctae Marthae. The following is the edited English text of the Pope's homily which was delivered in Italian.

In his homily at Holy Mass on Monday, 23 December, Pope Francis commented on the simple yet profound prayer found on the Church's lips in these days leading up to Christmas: "Come, Lord!" "In this final week before Christmas," the Pope said, "the Church repeats the prayer, 'Come, Lord!' and she calls out to the Lord with various and different names: O Wisdom, O Root of Jesse, O Dayspring, O King of the Nations, and today, O Emmanuel."

The Church calls out to the Lord in this way, the Pope explained, because "she is awaiting a birth." "This week the Church is like Mary: she is awaiting a birth." The Virgin, he said, "sensed within herself, in body and in soul," that the birth of her child was near. And he added: "surely in her heart she said to the baby she was carrying in her womb: 'Come, I want to see your face, for they have told me you will be great!'"

This Church lives this spiritually, Pope Francis continued, for "we accompany Our Lady in this journey of waiting" and "we too wish to hasten the Lord's birth." This, the Pontiff said, is the reason for the Church's prayer: "Come, O Key of David, O Dayspring, O Wisdom, O Emmanuel." This invocation, he said, recalls the final words in the Sacred Scripture; in the last lines of the Book of Revelation, the Church cries out: "Come, Lord Jesus," Maranatha, which "may indicate a desire or a certainty: the Lord is coming."

In fact, Pope Francis continued, "the Lord comes twice." His first coming is "what we are about to commemorate, his physical birth." Then, "he will come at the end of time, at the close of history." However, the Pontiff added, "St Bernard tells us that there is a third coming of the Lord: his coming to us each day: each day, the Lord visits his Church. He visits each one of us. And our soul also enters into this likeness: our soul comes to resemble the Church; our soul comes to resemble Mary." Here Pope Francis recalled that "the Desert Fathers say that Mary, the Church and the soul

are all feminine." Hence what is said of one may analogously be said of the others.

Therefore, the Pope continued, "our souls are waiting in anticipation for the coming of the Lord, open souls calling out: Come, Lord!" Over the course of these days, he said, the Holy Spirit moves in the heart of each one of us, forming this prayer within us: "come, come!" Throughout the Advent Season the Church keeps watch like Mary. And "watching is the virtue, the attitude, of pilgrims. We are pilgrims. Are we watching or are we closed? Are we vigilant or are we safe and secure in an inn, no longer wanting to continue on? Are we pilgrims or are we wandering?"

That is why the Church invites us to pray "come!" and to "open our souls in watchfulness." We are invited to perceive and understand "what is happening within us," to ask "if the Lord comes or does not come; if there is room for the Lord, or if there is room for celebration, for shopping, for making noise." This examination of conscience, he said, should lead us to ask ourselves: "Are our souls open, as the soul of Holy Mother Church is open, and as Mary's soul was open? Or have we closed our souls and put a highly erudite note on the door saying: please do not disturb?"

"The world does not end with us" and "we are not more important than the world." Therefore, "with Our Lady and the Church we would do well today to call out: O Wisdom, O Key of David, O King of the Nations, Come, Come!" and, he added, "we would do well to repeat it many times." It is a prayer, he said, that allows us to examine if our soul communicates to others that it does not wish to be disturbed, or if instead it is "an open soul, a great soul ready to receive the Lord." A soul, the Pope concluded, "that already feels what the Church will tell us tomorrow in the Antiphon: Know that today the Lord comes and tomorrow you shall behold his glory." □



THE BLIND SHALL SEE

From Fr. Ian Doultan's collection of stories

You are in Spain for this story; it has the warmth of Spanish sun, the starkness of its plains; the dignity of its cathedrals. It comes out of the heart of that land, but it speaks to the heart of the world.

Every morning there comes this elderly blind gentleman, affectionately known to everyone around here as grandfather Ribeiro. His clothes have many patches and he wears only sandals with soles of rope, but he walks confidently. What need has he of eyes when his grandson José walks beside him. This is the route they always take to the sea face. It's a cloudless day and the Mediterranean sun beats down mercilessly: "Well, José it's very hot today, no?" And it was.

Being blind all these years, grandfather Ribeiro can sense the humidity and the heat and he tells his little grandson José that perhaps there aren't any clouds... José isn't surprised at grandfather's assessment of the weather which is always true. "You are very wise, grandfather!" says the little boy. "Wise? No, José. I feel these things; I feel them on my face and in my nose." Walking down the side street there's the sound of the patter of little feet and grandfather recognizes the voice: "Grandfather, grandfather!" There's a little giggle as José tries to control his excitement. "Well, now, I wonder if I know who this is? She has fine hair, broad forehead, smooth cheeks, ha, ha! Of course, it is Papita!" This little guessing game always brought such joy to the children, José and

Papita.

The little girl looks up expectantly at the old man and grandfather Ribeiro realizes that. "José, did we bring any sweets with us today?" "I think you have some in your pocket...no, the other pocket." "There may be, well, let me see," rummaging through his pocket he looked down smiling. "Ah, yes, here are some sweets Papita." "*Muchos gracias!* Grandfather." "Now take them and run off and be careful." "*Adios grandfather, adios, José!*" "*Adios Papita!*" Jose watches her run off to her home. The old man and the little boy walk on together. They are on their way to the *Puerto del Mar*.

"Papita, she is pretty, no?"

"Yes, except for the eyes." Grandfather shakes his head as he says: "What a great, great shame, they're so badly crossed."

"Yes, it is hard to know when she was looking at one. The other children call her *bisca*, the cross-eyed one. She cries." José holds grandfather's hand as they walk.

Grandfather seems helpless and frustrated that her beauty seems to be spoiled with something like this. Then he stops and looks in the direction of José and said: "Once I heard of an operation to straighten the eyes while one is still young." Then he smiles. "But God help us! It would cost so much!" They walk in the shade of the awnings on the side street and gradually reach the *Alameda*. All of a sudden there's a lot of noise and that's because there's a lot of traffic. The little boy draws the old man to the side of the road say-

ing: "There are many, many cars today and many, many people." It was the middle of the morning and the pair was feeling the heat.

"Today we will go and stand near Antonio's restaurant because there will be shade over there." As they reached Antonio's the old man said: "José, put on the tickets for the lottery, now." "Yes, grandfather." Then proudly José exclaims: "Today we have five sheets of tickets to sell. I'll pin four sheets to the lapels of your coat and I'll hold one. Bend a little, grandfather." The old man bent forward so the little boy could reach the lapels of grandfather's coat. The sheets had special numbers and series. The old man wanted to know the numbers, so he could shout them out to invite passersby. "Oh we have two 13s a 33, a 55 and a 69." The old man wanted to know the series: "21" said the little boy eagerly.

The old man raised his voice as he stood in the shade of Antonio's awning: "We have two 13s, come and buy a fortune. We have the lucky numbers." The little boy piped in too: "33, 55, oh, such lucky numbers... Signor, buy a ticket please?"

The old man asked his grandson if there were any tourists. He could hear sounds, voices and foreign tongues. He had a keen sense of hearing. The little boy looked around and saw tourists, though not so many. Then all of a sudden he saw a couple strolling along the *Alameda* and he told his grandfather. "A man and woman are coming now, they are English or Americans." "Does the man wear a tie?" The old man asked. José said, "No." "Does he wear a belt?" the old man went on. "Yes"

said José. Grandfather Ribeiro wanted to know if he had a camera and José said: "The lady has." "Oh, then they are American." As they approach and hear José shout the numbers to draw their attention: "21, 25, a lucky number." The lady is fascinated and turns to her husband: "Oh, look George, isn't that boy cute? What are they doing?"

"They're selling lottery tickets. The old man's blind, and all the blind people have formed themselves into a syndicate. They hold a lottery everyday."

"And I suppose their pay depends on the number of tickets they sell."

"No, I think they get paid a fixed salary. It's an idea of the government to keep them from begging." The lady was fascinated by José. He looked so smart and so concerned for his grandfather.

"George I'd like to buy a ticket and give it to the little boy."

Her husband was skeptical and he mumbled: "He'll probably see it and keep the money." The lady was adamant: "I don't care." Her husband went on: "If they do win, the old man will drink up all the money." "You're too cynical. Ask the boy how much the tickets are, go on, George."

"Alright," he said reluctantly, "*Muchacho*, how much are the tickets today?"

José is excited: "Three pesetas, Signor." The lady told him to pick out a ticket and said she'd pay for it. Grandfather Ribeiro heard this: "Go on, José pick one out. The lady means very well and who knows it may be lucky."

José looked at the sheets and then said: "I will take," and he paused, "21, 47." The American

gentleman nodded and took out his wallet and gave the boy the money; "three pesetas."

José was touched at the tenderness of the lady and he told the gentleman: "Tell the lady we are thankful." The old man added: "*Muchos gracias, señor e signora. Now you go with God.*"

The old man leaned back against the wall and wiped the perspiration from his brow. Then thinking aloud he told José what he thought of doing if that was to be the winning ticket. He wanted a radio. He dreamed of listening to music in the evenings sitting outside his door with the windows open and letting the music just stream over him. José on the other hand wanted a bicycle. He could ride to the port and go fishing so that he wouldn't have to pay the forbidding prices the fishmongers were asking. They were thieves. Then they caught themselves day-dreaming and the old man said: "Yes, but now we must sell the rest of the tickets José." Then raising his old quivering voice he said as loudly as he could: "We have a 13, come and buy a fortune!" José adds his numbers too: "21, 35..."

And so the day ended. They sold all the tickets and this time José had one of his very own. So, the next morning they stopped at the newsstand of Francisco, the fat one. Of course they used to do that every morning and so he knew what this pair wanted. "I suppose you want so see if any of your numbers was lucky. I'll look in the paper myself. It should be on page 3." The old man and the little boy held their breath and looked at each other. "Here we are. The lucky number is: 21 47." The little

boy's eyes were large with excitement and he wanted to repeat the number out loud. He had memorized it all of last night. He was bursting with excitement but the old man firmly drew him aside while he thanked Francisco. "*Muchos gracias, Francisco, no, no, José, come, we must go to work.*"

They had barely gone out of earshot and José tugged at the coat of the old man: "Grandfather, grandfather, we have won yesterday's lottery." The old man shook his head and said: "Yes I know José, God has been very good to us. Oh, never did I think we would ever win the lottery." José couldn't believe it and all the way to the *Alameda* he kept repeating: "Three thousand pesetas!"

For the wisdom of his years, the old man whispered to the little boy: "It is not good that anybody should know, because money can be the bait that brings worthless fish." José was eager to know if there would be enough to buy both a bicycle and a radio and grandfather Ribeiro nodded and said it would most certainly suffice.

Then he paused along the sidewalk and looked down in the direction of his little guide: "But I'm beginning to wonder José, do I really need a radio?" The boy was puzzled. So the old man went on: "We have never had a radio and if anything should go wrong how will I pay for it and then we would miss it greatly." José pleaded that there would be music in the house but the old man simply assured his grandson that he could always hear music at the Cathedral on Sundays and in the evening he could go to the park to listen to the band. Then he turned to José: "You wanted a bicycle but perhaps you

would fall down or someone would steal it and you would be very unhappy." José didn't know where all this was leading: "But what will we *do* with all the money?" "Well, I am trying to think, José there is perhaps enough money to buy an operation for Papita." He seemed so excited as he went on: "Oh, it would be a great thing; it would be like buying beauty and then when she grows up she will be able to get a husband and life will not be spoiled because her eyes are not straight." Then he looked down once more at José: "Would that not be good, José?" Then both of them were distracted with the bright sound of a cycle bell coming to them from the traffic. José looked longingly at the bicycle weaving its way through the traffic but the little boy remembered what his grandfather had said about an accident. The old man was caught up in his own thoughts and he simply said out loud: "An operation for Papita, that would be good, no?" José finally could see the joy in Papita's eyes and the great joy it would give the old man and he firmly ended the conversation: "That is what we will do! Perhaps, when I grow up I'll marry her myself." Grandfather Ribeiro began to laugh out loud and patted his little grandson on the head affectionately. "Come, we will collect the money from the office of the Syndicate and then we will look for the doctor."

Never had they seen so much money: three one thousand peseta notes. They took the money and quickly found the office of an eye surgeon on the *Caia Principal*, the door is open, José peeked in. His

eyes became very large. Never had he seen a room so clean with carpets on the floor and flowers in the pots. But the grandfather saw none of these things so he was not afraid to walk inside and sit on a chair. Then suddenly a door opened and José was nervous because the person looked at him. "Grandfather, a man comes, he wears a white suit." "Buenos Dias" "Buenos Dias!" said the grandfather, "You are the doctor?" "Yes, what is the trouble?" "We have a little friend and she is *bisca*, her eyes are badly crossed. I heard there is an operation to remedy this." "How old is the girl?" "Oh five, six," said the old man, "I'm not sure." Then the doctor wanted to know if she was a relative of his. But the old man simply said: "Oh, no I have no relatives, only my grandson, José."

The doctor told them that the operation would be expensive but the old man assured the doctor that they did have some money. "Here is what we two have, three thousand." The doctor was impressed but said that would barely pay for the hospital expenses. Then the doctor added: "I'm not sure the operation can be done until I see the girl. Perhaps she can't be helped." "When can we bring her?" "This afternoon," the doctor said. The doctor was puzzled and wondered where they found the money, because three thousand pesetas was a large amount. The old man nodded: "That is so, but José here won the Blind Men's Lottery yesterday." The doctor was touched and asked: "Was there nothing you needed yourselves?" "Well, I thought of a radio and José would

Continued on pg. 30

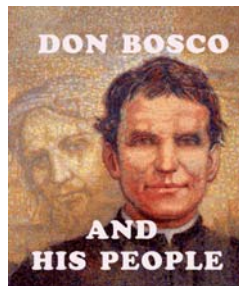
A SENSE OF DUTY CHAPTER 9 (ED.)

by Natale Cerrato

Among the politicians that Don Bosco knew and to whom he respectfully addressed his requests for his works, Giovanni Lanza (1810-1882) occupies a particular place.

In 1855, when Lanza was Minister of Education, a royal decree was issued with respect to secondary education. The decree required among other things, the official degree for the third year grammar school teachers in colleges of the provincial capitals. This caused considerable worry to Don Bosco who did not have licensed teachers in his schools. The Minister, aware of Don Bosco's charitable work at the Oratory of Valdocco, did not curtail the freedom of Don Bosco in choosing his teachers. On the contrary, in 1856, as a sign of his esteem, he honoured him with a cash prize for his *History of Italy!*

He was born at Casale Monferrato on February 15, 1810. In 1832 he graduated in medicine from the University of Turin. The first time one notices his sense of duty was when he interrupted his specialization course at Parma during the outbreak of Cholera in 1835. He went to assist the victims of that epidemic first in Cuneo and then in Genoa, returning to his studies only when the danger was averted. Meanwhile, his family had bought a farmstead in Roncaglia, a village a few miles from Casale. The property and the attached house was then bequeathed to Giovanni when the property was divided. That was the field of his dreams, his centre



for agricultural research, the place where he could come to relax. But his studies and his agricultural pursuits did not distract him from his medical profession which he practiced first in Casale, then in Turin taking special care of the sick who were poor and most in need.

A man of duty, Giovanni Lanza always disdained every subtle suggestion of statecraft. Faithful to his King, he was never a courtier. A sincere believer, he never shied away from a painful responsibility. He loved his people and his land and lived aloof in austere solitude so that he was always ready for the call of duty like a soldier of old Piedmont.

It will be said that not everything in the history of Piedmont was heroic; which of course is true. But if to remember a fact only, during the siege of Turin, there was no shortage of cowards who fled the city in that time of peril, but there were also 9000 brave men who resisted to the end and among them, the clergy, first and foremost was Father

Sebastiano Valfrè (1629-1710). In addition to his 77 years, he had many reasons to join the ranks of those who fled but he remained in the besieged city and was the soul of the resistance. They were men of steel and nurtured a tradition and culture of duty.

The spirit of Don Bosco is linked to this tradition. He knew that in the line of duty, not just to sacrifice oneself in one heroic instance, but to live one's entire life heroically.

The sense of duty was deeply rooted in him from his childhood, thanks to the education of his mother. Mamma Margaret never missed an opportunity to teach him, like before leaving home to go and work in the fields or when she went shopping to the village, she left her children precise tasks to be completed to which they would have to render an account the minute she returned.

A student at Chieri in a class of teenager, John, tall and well-built almost like the teacher who was heard to comment: "He's either a mole or really talented," and he replied: "Something in between: a poor youngster who has the willingness to do his duty and to advance in his studies."

The facts confirmed his words. Already at sixteen he founded the Cheerful Society with his closest friends, thus revealing his apostolic zeal, those organization skills and that educational style that would characterize his future work. The rules of the society that he set out were just two, including the perfect fulfilment of his scholastic responsibilities and his religious duties.

On entering the seminary the young seminarian Bosco went to

the Professor of Philosophy Father Ternavasio of Bra to ask him for a rule of life. "Only one thing," said the wise priest, "the exact fulfilment of your duties."

And Don Bosco would write in his Memoirs: "I took this advice as the basis and gave myself with all my heart to the observance of the rules of the Seminary. He made no distinction between the bell that summoned him to study, to church, to the refectory, to recreation or to relaxation."

In his second year at the seminary he was joined by his friend Luigi Comollo, who died a little later, still a cleric, in the odor of sanctity. Don Bosco made some biographical notes in which he noted that Comollo had "utmost concern for his duty of study and piety," and that "he had written in a notebook the following aphorism, "He does much who does little but what he does is what he must do; he does nothing who does much but does not do what he has to do." It is easy to understand that the aphorism that Comollo followed was the same as what the seminarian Bosco did.

Having become a priest he entered the Convitto Ecclesiastico of Turin where Don Bosco found a most sublime model of a sense of duty in Don Joseph Cafasso. On the occasion of the death of this saint, Don Bosco would say: "There was nothing more marvelous than the private life of Don Cafasso, what exact observance of the rules of the *Convitto Ecclesiastico* of St. Francis [...]. He firmly held in his mind that the most effective command of a superior is his good example, which inculcates in the subjects the

fulfilment of their respective duties."

Talking to his boys one evening Don Bosco said to them:

"You are fortunate indeed because you are young and still have time to do many wonderful things for God and gain many merits for heaven, but I (*and he said this with emotion*) am already old and will soon have to die and go empty-handed to the Lord."

In reply, one of us remarked, "Father, you can't say that. You are working without rest day and night. You can't say you are empty-handed!"

"Well," he replied, "what I do, I am bound to do. I am a priest, and even if I gave my life I wouldn't be doing more than my duty." (EBM 6, 498)

On his lips there were frequently expressions such as: "Let us not grow weary in the fulfillment of all our duties"; "Everyone should commit himself to his duty"; "Your mortifications like diligence to your duties."

He always taught by example. Just think of the hours he spent every day in the confessional, in audiences, in replying correspondence, in the apostolate of the good press. The condition of his health did not prevent him in his last years from undertaking long and painful journeys for the good of the Congregation, thus fulfilling his duty right to the end. To those who asked him if he had worked miracles, Don Bosco one day replied: "How do you expect me to answer such a question? I have never thought of doing anything but my duty, praying and putting my trust in our Lady." (EBM 17:64)

Pius XI in his homily on Decem-

ber 3, 1933 while reading the decree of the "tuto" for the canonization of Don Bosco expressed the same idea in paying tribute to the blood of martyrs, while considering the hidden martyrdom of those who cherish being loyal to God till death, fulfilling one's duty in "that terrible daily work which never changes and which requires the same diligence, the same conscientiousness, precision and punctuality, without moral compensations."

He went on to say: "Blessed Don Bosco his rightful place in this magnificent ambient and in the context of these things. Here is a life – and we have been able to see it up close, in detail and precision to appreciate it – a life that was a real, truly a great martyrdom." (BM 19:315)

The same pontiff, in a conference on May 31, 1934 to the students of the Salesian Institute in Rome that bore his name said: "In the life of Don Bosco we must particularly imitate his heroic fidelity to his duty at every moment and also in the daily succession of tasks that presented themselves. He was always ready to be available to the last meeting, to the last request. He was ready to devote himself to everything and everyone as if each and every one was the only person there."

In treating the concept of duty in Don Bosco, Caviglia wrote: "Duty is conceived and presented as a matter of a conscience directed to God, and it is whatever may be of service to God. Hence, the noble precision with which he addresses and accustoms his disciple, who, in fulfilling what life asks of him, work is an exercise of moral advancement and spiritual

elevation."

This religious pedagogy is reflected in the biographies that Don Bosco wrote of the three boys: Dominic Savio, Michael Magone and Francis Besucco, who grew up at his school, in order to educate his boys. Dominic Savio, of Riva di Chieri, only 15 years old, reached the heights of youthful sanctity. But Don Bosco also pointed out first of all the great rule of duty which he would mention in the biography: "It was what Don Bosco wanted and to which he gave more importance than advances in piety or mortifications."

Savio, who became an apostle among his companions, spread among them the goal of doing one's duties. He told his friend Camillo Gavio of Tortona, who always shared with him the desire of doing God's will: "We will try to fulfill our duties exactly."

The "ruffian" of Carmagnola, Michael Magone, entered the Oratory with his lively character and was dissipated. Don Bosco conquers that ragamuffin and set him on the path to goodness. How? In the biography of Magone there is a chapter entitled "Punctilious in his Duty." It is chapter seven where the biographer presents a new Magone, who is self-disciplined in doing his duties. Indeed he reaches a point of heroism.

The little shepherd boy of Argentera, Francis Besucco, reached Valdocco and was amazed to find himself among 700 boys who suddenly became his companions. These boys, who he saw in the playground, the refectory, the dormitory, at school, in the study hall, he believed them to be good and

he didn't know how to make himself like them.

"If you want to be good," Don Bosco said, "practice only three things and all will be well. Practice cheerfulness, study and piety."

He read these words on a placard hanging in Don Bosco's room: "Every moment is a treasure." He asked for an explanation. The saintly educator replied: "But it's true. In every moment of time we can learn some scientific or religious fact, we can practice some virtue, we can make an act of the love of God; before the Lord there are so many treasures which will help us in time and in eternity." After that he set about his various tasks with even greater application.

It is the ordinary things, the simple and common commitments of all college and school students, the little tasks, but practiced with great diligence; a quick way to holiness. In fact, Don Bosco considered the good use of time in one's daily duties as the first sign of a desire to become saints.

The example of these three boys of Valdocco gives one an idea of the atmosphere that was prevalent at the Oratory in those years under the guidance of Don Bosco. How often, during his evening talks to the boys he presented this commitment to life. In the chapter on "tireless work" we have already referred to, Don Bosco codified the obligation to daily work, which is understood as the fulfillment of the duties of their state sufficient to recall his insistence on this theme. Perhaps no other educator has insisted so much on having a sense of duty as did Don Bosco. □



THAT NIGHT IN BETHLEHEM

from an idea by Lorenzo Bortolin

The Story of Christmas Through The Eyes of Mary

A Merry Christmas to you all! This time I thought of telling you a little something from my life, in words adapted to your times.

One day Joseph came home from the synagogue; he is my husband and he is a carpenter, a good and patient man. Well, that Shabbat he looked worried. He said: "The poor always have to pay for everything!" He's always been a man of few words. I thought he meant that someone didn't want to pay him for some work. He went on: "They say that the emperor wants to take a census. Knowing how many we are means knowing how many Roman cohorts must be stationed here, how much tax they will make us pay and it ends up that our friends pay nothing but we instead...." That's nothing new. So, in addition to the Temple tax we will have new tributes to Caesar and that's not all. Since I belong to the family of David, we will have to be registered in Bethlehem." I looked at him shocked. But I'm pregnant. It'll only be a matter of days and the child will be born, indeed the Child.

How can I make this journey in this state? Where will we sleep? How will we eat? Don't be surprised by these questions of mine. I know that the power of the Most High will be with us, but a bit of reality (feminine). I'm not thinking of disturbances. He spread out his arms: "Let's get ready." I looked around. A few things: a tunic and a spare shawl, the baby's headbands, an amphora of water during the trip and a bit of hay for the donkey. We stepped out of the front door and we're off... not a word.

A CAVE TO REST

I won't tell you about the trip. Nazareth to Bethlehem is 150 kilometres apart. There are only mule tracks, stony and winding precisely because they go through villages and fields. Yet we chose this because it's far from the risky coastal road or from the mountainous ones of Samaria. Of course, in one or two villages some women offered me a piece of unleavened bread and something to drink but I'd rather forget the trip. The beauty, so to speak, was yet to come.

When we finally reached

Bethlehem we saw chaos. And the inn, or was it rather a caravanse-rai? There were a few rooms on the side already occupied, a verandah for shelter from the cold night air and the courtyard was full of animals all huddled up. People were eating and drinking and singing, talking about money... and the Romans. Dirt, smells of all kinds. Joseph looked around disgusted; not the Bethlehem he expected. "Let's go," he said. Back on the donkey...even the poor beast dreamed of a bit of rest... instead...just outside the village a man showed us a cave. We settled down inside. There was an ox there and we warmed ourselves in its heat. Fortunately it was quiet, not like before.

THIS IS REALLY INCREDIBLE

Joseph and I breathed a sigh of relief: so far everything had gone well. Just as we're about to fall asleep, I realized I was in labour. What? Right now? I felt like saying and then a few minutes later, here I was with my, sorry, our Jesus in my arms: a bawling little bundle, I wrapped him up immediately. I'm exhausted. I placed him in the manger: the ox and the donkey warmed him with their breath. It did not seem real to me; this was 'my' baby, born in these conditions, "He will be called the Almighty Son and his kingdom will have no end." How was that possible? Even Joseph was stunned, he had a feeling that something extraordinary has just happened that night.

THE SHEPHERD WITH A GIFT

While both of us are still busy, some shepherds turned up. I think that was something unexpected.

I could not send them away. They came up to me and I was afraid. We're Jews and because of their work we considered them unclean. Instead, they told us about angels and bright lights and we began to understand – yes, we understood...but it took some time! We were experiencing something amazing. They, the unclean ones, were the first to see Jesus. So much for the distinctions we humans make. A little shepherd at the entrance of the cave tried not to catch our eye but I signaled to him to come closer. "I have nothing to give you" he whispered, "I'm sorry. I'm the only one empty-handed!" So I told him to hold the baby in his arms while I changed his bands. A smile burst out on his rugged face: the one without gifts was the first to receive the Gift from the Most High; another sign. It was for this reason perhaps that I could hear the angels sing: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those he favours." Joseph looked at me and his hand tightened in mine. We cried...yes, we too cried for joy.

And then? Some readers ask me; my delivery wasn't easy. All three of us immediately fled to Egypt because of Herod. Then we returned to Nazareth where we would revisit all those things. I will tell you what happened next some other time; for now, Merry Christmas to you and the family.

P.S. – Dear friends, if you liked this story, read it to your children and grandchildren. Finally give each of them a hug and say: "Mary, the Mother of Jesus is the Help of Christians and she loves you as much as she loves Him." □

Continued from pg. 23
have liked a bicycle..." Then he nudged the little boy: "You tell the doctor, José." "We do not need these things." The doctor looked into the eyes of the little boy and repeated his words in disbelief: "You do not need these things?"

The doctor changed the subject and asked if he might examine the old man's eyes and was told that the old man had been blind all his life. "It's too late now," The doctor said regrettably. It might have been cured when he was younger but they had no money even then and he added: "In those days people thought that to be blind was a natural thing." So saying the doctor stood up and said: "Away with you, then and bring the girl!"

Now it is the afternoon. The grandfather and the little boy have returned to the office of the doctor and Papita is with them and she is frightened. She doesn't want to let the doctor see her eyes. The doctor reassures her he won't hurt her. Then having convinced her with a piece of candy the doctor carefully examines Papita's eyes. When he looks up he says: "Grandfather, the eyes can be corrected."

The grandfather was so moved all he could say was: "God is

good!" The doctor agreed to arrange for the operation and then added: "A few days ago I bought a new radio. I've no need for the old one, I brought it from my room here it is. Not very good, but you can get the local stations. Take it." The old man was moved: "Oh for that, God bless you, you are very good." Then the doctor added, "Bring the girl again on Thursday. We will make all arrangements." The old man could only nod his head and say: "Adios."

As the old man and his grandson came away from the doctor's office he said to José: "Great pity, the American Signora does not know about this." The little boy just looked down and kicked a stone as he said: "Who knows! She would not care!"

"Oh, I think she would," said the old man, "She had a very kind voice." Then he raised his head as if to take in the surroundings, and said: "José, are there many people on the street?" "There are many people," said José. "Well, pin the lottery tickets to my coat."

José asked Papita to help him pin the tickets to the old man's coat. And another working day for grandfather Rebeiro and José wound down. □

NEWSBITS

VATICAN CITY

Who could have imagined that on Saturday, July 14, 2018 Pope Francis arrived at *Santo Stefano degli Abissini* where the wedding between a Swiss guard and an employee of the Vatican Museums was being celebrated. The newlyweds, Luca Elia Maria Schafer and the Brazilian Leticia Vera, had sent the Pontiff a request to attend their wedding but they were not hoping for much. Bergoglio, however, without any notice, was found in the ancient church of the Vatican that stands behind the Basilica of St. Peter.



Totally startled those present, beginning with Father Renato dos Santos, the Brazilian priest in charge of celebrating the function who almost had a fit when, as he entered the sacristy to prepare for mass, he found the Pope waiting seated and smiling. "Never in my life, never would I have thought of finding the Pope in a sacristy", he declared in an interview with Vatican News, "the guests wondered if before them was really Pope Francis". **"In him I saw - says Father Renato - the true parish priest who takes care of his**

own sheep in the parish, with all his sweetness and tenderness".

The news of the Pope's presence at the wedding was spread by the other priests present on the various social networks. In particular Father Omar Reposo, Rector of the Shrine of Christ the Redeemer-Corcow (Rio de Janeiro), from his account Instagram published the photo of the Pope with the bride and groom accompanied by the caption: "Look at who came as a surprise!" Pope Francis always surprises!

In his homily - Father dos Santos recounts - Francis indicated three actions to fully live the gift of marriage: "To begin, to stop, to resume the journey". The Pontiff "has the value of marriage at heart", the priest observed, "in him there is love for this sacrament which gives rise to a family and which wants to put God at the centre".

It is not the first time that Pope Francis has presided over a wedding in the Vatican: we shall remember the wedding ceremony of 20 couples in St. Peter's of September 2014 or that of a couple of deaf people celebrated in the chapel of the Casa Santa Marta in July 2016. Without forgetting the famous "in-flight wedding" of the Chilean hostess and steward in service on the plane on which the Pope travelled during the trip in January to Chile. □

La Stampa, Salvatore Cernuzio

HELP



*When I tremble in the darkness, of a long unending night,
Help me find the way again, Lord be my light.
When I'm beaten to the ground and my world comes to a stop,
Help me to get up again, Lord be my prop.
When I'm drifting with the current and I'm weak against the tide,
Help me find safe waters, Lord be my guide.
When the burden on my shoulder gets heavier by the hour,
Give me strength to carry it, Lord be my power.
When the mists begin to gather and my life draws to an end,
Take me to your loving heart, be ever, Lord, my friend.*

Patricia Walsh

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Rich Investment

His wife made a millionaire of him. Before that he was a multi-millionaire.

Sixth Sense

Things were quiet at the police station. One officer yawned and complained: "What a dull week! No burglaries, no fights, no murders. If this keeps up, they'll be laying us off."

"Don't worry, Murphy," said the chief. "Something's bound to happen. I've still got faith in human nature."

Survival of The Fittest

"Yes sir," said the old man, "I'll be ninety tomorrow, and I haven't an enemy in the world." "A beautiful thought," said the visitor.

"Yes sir," went on the old man, "I've outlived them all."

Photo-Finish

Two women were driving in the country one day when they stopped by an old castle that was a little more than a pile of ruins. One of them suggested taking a photograph.

"OK," said the other. "But don't get the car in the picture or my husband will think we've been reversing again."

Height of Impersonation

"Doctor, I'm worried about my friend. He thinks he's an elevator."

"I'd better have a look at him. Send him up, will you?"

"I can't. He doesn't stop at your floor."

Fresh Breath

A 'nouveau riche' woman watched in great alarm as her husband was dragged spluttering from a hotel swimming pool.

"Give him artificial respiration," someone shouted.

"The woman became most indignant.

"What do you mean 'artificial'?" she cried.

"We can afford the real thing."

Family Fare

A teacher asked one of her pupils how he liked his new house.

"It's great, Miss," he replied. "I've got my own room. So's my sister. And my brother. But poor old Dad's still got to sleep with Mum."

Thrifty Mom

"Dear Miss," read a school-mistress in a note from a parent that was delivered to her, "Jimmy swallowed a fifty cent piece last night. I'm keeping him in bed today and will call the doctor tomorrow if there's no change."

Root of the Matter

My ancestry goes all the way back to Alexander the Great," said one guest to another, "and how far does your family go back?"

"I really don't know," replied the second, "All our records were lost in the flood." □

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.

I am sincerely grateful to my dear Mother Mary, through the recitation of the three Hail Marys my son Sherrick made a quick recovery when he was rushed to the emergency ward of the hospital for a sudden fit of shivering. Anthony D'Sa, Goa
Thank you, dear Mother Mary, for granting me and my family innumerable favours, big and small through the recitation of the Three Hail Marys. Specially thank you for solving my husband's problems.

Mavis V
Thanks to the faithful praying of the three Hail Marys, my son was granted admission overseas. I am most grateful to Our Lady.

THEY ARE GRATEFUL TO OUR LADY AND DON BOSCO

My heartfelt gratitude to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mother Mary for countless blessings in my life in the recent past.

Bina Isaac, Vellore
My sincere thanks to Jesus, Mary, St. Joseph, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the good health of me and my children.

Evelyn A. Hopkins



THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO

Sincere thanks to our Lady Help of Christians and Dominic Savio, for the gift of a baby boy Emmanuel, to our son and daughter-in-law. Mrs. M. Reeves

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

DECEMBER 2018

In the Service of the Transmission of Faith

That people, who are involved in the service and transmission of faith, may find, in their dialogue with culture, a language suited to the conditions of the present time.

NIGHT

One of Correggio's most beautiful paintings

by Stefano Ugolini

Professor of Art History, University of Perugia

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep shadow a light has shone (Is 9,1).*

During nights in December when darkness, cold and death seem to expunge all signs of life, a golden teardrop falls from the heavens to warm the earth. It is that time of the year when the ancient Romans celebrated the rebirth of *Sol Invictus*, the Church from its very inception recalls the advent of the Divine Light into the world with the celebration of the Nativity of Christ. Down the centuries artists have found this to be one of the most popular subjects to be represented. The silence, the waiting, the wonder and the infinite simplicity of Christmas is admirably brought once more to our eyes in the masterpiece conceived in the heart of Reggio Emilia by the work of Antonio Allegri also known as *Correggio*. *The Adoration of the Shepherds* painted by Correggio between 1525 and 1530 for the Pratonieri chapel of the church of St. Prospero in Reggio Emilia is popularly known as *La Notte* (The Night). The painting is among his most celebrated and reproduced works. The work remained at its original location for over a century and was viewed and admired by Vasari among others, who spoke of it in glowing terms. In 1640 it was bought by Francesco I of Este for the ducal collection of Modena where it remained till 1745 when Duke Francesco III sold it (to save the duchy from a dismal financial crisis) to the commissioner of Saxony, Frederick Augustus II. Since then *La Notte* has fascinated visitors who visit the Gemäldegalerie in Dresden, Germany.

JESUS IS THE LIGHT THAT GIVES LIFE AND POWER

Correggio, (blending painting of Raffaello and the great Venetian masters) was inspired by the story of the Evangelist Luke and he immediately captured the atmosphere of wonder, shock and fear that pulsed through the shepherds of Bethlehem that night. The nocturnal setting is in fact made extremely suggestive by the effect of the light which radiates from the Divine Child at the centre of the composition and which pans out over the other protagonists and the choir of angels who are perched on soft clouds above, recalling the frescoes of Allegri seen in the dome of the Cathedral of Saint John the Evangelist in Parma.

In that spectacular night scene Correggio seems to capture the medieval neo-Platonic philosophy of light, attributing to it the absolute beauty of the Spirit of God. Plato in fact, had established a direct relationship between goodness and sunlight, itself the prin-

ciple of knowledge.

The light emanating from the infant Jesus whose warmth one can almost feel comes alive in this work. Under the pretext of enhancing the reactions of the spectators, it emphasizes that only the Virgin Mary is not affected by the intense light. The subject of the Nativity, itself a static subject, does not reveal any particular movement of the figures, it comes to life around the miraculous light, creating history, a story. The light is therefore what gives life and energy. It is the Spirit that shakes up all the characters in the painting and Mary reflects it like a mirror of pure water. In fact, the face of Mary is treated as if all the light and the divinity of the Son blends into it, thanks to that unique communion that exists between her and Christ. The light then, is not here just for some special effect but it is the Light, the Spirit of God, the principle of creation that shines in the darkness of the world announcing the dawn of a new era for humanity.



BEAUTY SPEAKS OF BEAUTY

The painting, the chiaroscuro and the colours of the great Antonio are unparalleled and incomparable. In this painting - the most "anti-classic" of the artist from Emilia possess the characteristics of "naturalness" and an unmistakable "tenderness" which are gathered together in this timeless feature and will continue to enliven this painting for centuries to come. Many details of the work, like so many of his daring creations, seem to anticipate at once the Baroque "wonders" of the next century: the wellspring of light that Jesus spreads on the long ears of corn forestall the Eucharistic motif; Mary's hair bathed in that light; the overall movement of the elderly shepherd in the foreground; the fearful retreat of the girl and finally that semblance of a hint of the approaching new day hinted at by the profile of the well-known hills of Val d'Enza where the dawn seems to be breaking.

The rustic tranquility of the countryside; the mute and tender relationship between Mother and Son, the amazed and frightened reaction of the spectators dazzled by the divine Light makes the Night as clear as the Day, a Night when Heaven is united to Earth in the Sun that shines from the manger. This is beauty born at the hands of man which still speaks of a timeless Beauty which is eternal. □

Regd RNI no. 9360/57;
Postal Regn. MNE/89/2018-2020
WPP License to port 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. 200 p.a.; Airmail: Rs 500 p.a.

MARY WAS THERE

Not a single day goes by
without praying the three
Hail Marys and thanking
Mother Mary, Don Bosco and
St. Dominic Savio. God knows
when to fulfil our needs, at
the right time. - I was worried
on account of my son's
admission into a college of his
choice. I did not give up. I
kept on praying to Mother
Mary, Don Bosco and St.
Dominic Savio. My prayers
were answered. I am very
grateful. *A. Barreto, 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