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*Through the glorious  
 intercession of Blessed  
 Mary ever-Virgin,  
 may we be set free  
 from present sorrow  
 and come to enjoy  
 eternal happiness.*

*(From the Common of the BVM)*

**From The Editor's Desk**  
 ADOPTING THE WORLD

It was one of those days that, as they say, 'I got up on the wrong side of my bed' in a raw mood. I was cycling to a nearby convent for Mass when I saw this man sweeping the side of the road. He did that every morning, but this morning he looked up, smiled and said, 'Good morning, sir!' It was just a minute but it changed my mood instantly. My Eucharist that morning went exceptionally well, I thought.

It was such a simple little thing but the anonymous gesture of indiscriminate friendliness and goodwill blew away the clouds and gave a fresh start to my day. I made a point of being friendly to everyone the rest of that day.

If I had never seen old Rajat again, the incident would have remained with me as one of those small lessons that tend to get left out of the formal curriculum of school - friendliness, when it is shared grows.

But in the following weeks, I saw Rajat pretty often. We never spoke because I was always in a hurry, but he, with the swish of his broom, that broad smile and slight nod greeted me each time he saw me with 'Good morning, sir!' I noticed he would sit on a bench for quite some time simply chatting with those who took the time chat for a bit.

Rajat was a native to this side town, recently retired from a career in the local municipality. His wife had died a few years previously. With no children, and estranged from his sisters who lived on the other side of town, he had become slightly unhinged by the abrupt plunge into a solitary life. To compensate, I believe, he adopted the whole world.

There was this one time when I was just wheeling my cycle, talking to a friend and walking in the opposite direction when I noticed Rajat who waved out to me and smiled. In that brief encounter, he asked me where I stayed and I told him, just down the road and he said that he stayed in a shack near the tracks. That was the extent of that chat.

Then one day I saw him have a conversation with another friend of his, I presume. The latter seemed rather new to the area. He was looking around and seemed rather distraught. I later came to know that he had hitch-hiked from another city and hopped off as the train passed through the shunting yard. He had suffered a stroke and dragged around his left hand and foot.

Rajat himself wasn't well off but the two got on contentedly. They were seen on that bench most mornings bright and serene. He lived by himself and now this stranger, Yogesh had moved in with Rajat. There was a kind of regime they followed. And whenever I passed by I received a cordial greeting which most certainly brightened the rest of my day.

As I watched Rajat fuss over Yogesh like a mother hen, helping him unwrap his lunch and peeling his banana for him I learned the corollary to the previous lesson - loneliness when it is shared, diminishes.

*Fr. Ian Doulton, sdb*

## MAN BEFORE THE SABBATH

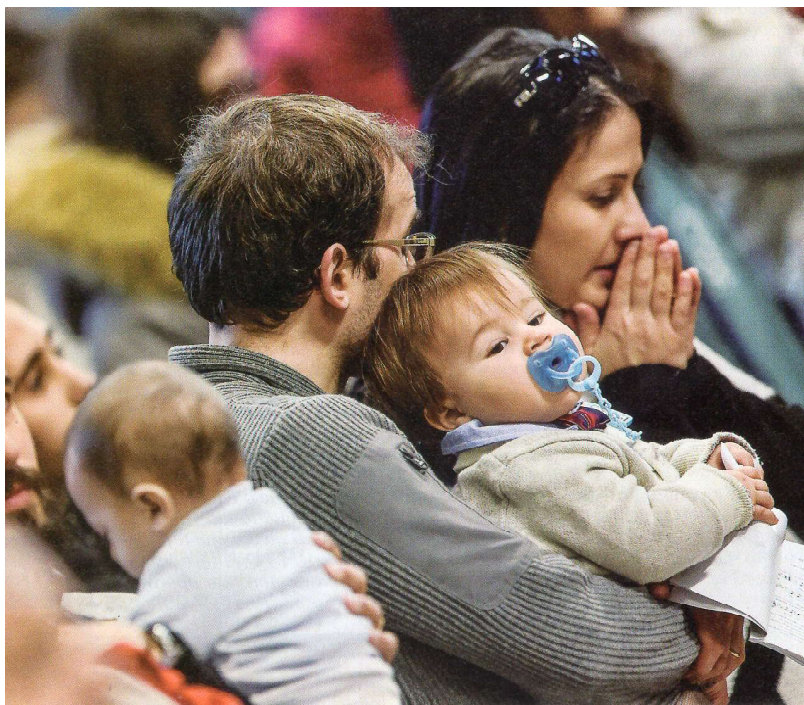
by Bishop Gianpaolo Dianin

*The Apostolic Exhortation "Amoris Laetitia" – "The Joy of Love" highlights - with a completely new perspective - the covenant that unites the Church and the family in everyday life.*

Ever since the promulgation of the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, in one form or other, we have been discussing the new alliance between the Church and family, which serves as its interpreter. The Church embraces the family not out of compassion but out of passion, as it values people and evangeli-

zation, recognizing that both are central to family life. Simultaneously, the family regards the Church as a nurturing mother within the Christian community, providing love, support, and spiritual nourishment to its members.

The synodal journey of the family has found in *Amoris*



Laetitia not a final point but a stage in a journey that continues and that provokes both the family and the Church, which, in contact with the domestic sanctuary, finds itself rethinking itself. In this sense, *Amoris Laetitia* is in continuity with Pope Francis' programmatic document, *Evangelii Gaudium*. It's never too late to ask: What face of the Church emerges from reading *Amoris Laetitia*?

It is a Church that believes in the importance of reality over ideas; however, ideas are also the truth, which is the jealous guardian. But people are honest, history is natural with all its contradictions, and the truth of the Gospel has the traits of proximity, of the importance of man over the Sabbath (Mk 2:23-28), gradualness and patience, respect and appreciation of each person's steps. A Church that knocks at every door to cross its threshold and bring the light of the Gospel puts itself at stake in an unconditional welcome to all.

It is a Church that lives between space and time. Space extends to the peripheries of all kinds, refusing borders and customs because it is projected towards every man. A Catholic Church is not universal and abstract but it embraces the whole man and all men in whatever situation they find themselves.

A Church that, from the family, learns to govern in a synodal manner, walks together, listens to everyone because everyone is important; that does not intend to exclude anyone, on the contrary, feels provoked by those who are more fragile and must become the object of greater attention –

an inclusive Church where no one must be lost. Inclusion entails the acceptance of diversity, which must not be eliminated but worked out so that unity prevails over conflict.

A Church of incomplete thinking that does not close discourses but keeps them open because life is like that in its unpredictability linked to the many earthquakes of history. It is a clear thought, but also always open to new developments because the gospel's truth is always beyond and never fully possessed by anyone. A Church that is always in a state of dialogue continues to walk even after two years of Synod, confusing those who trusted specific rules and precise criteria.

A Church that is merciful because its God is, and where mercy is not a bureaucratic act but the will to hold together all that would be destined to be lost. A Church that not only sees the shortcomings present in its children and knows how to call them by name but also sees the fullness that each one can gradually arrive at. A Church that stubbornly seeks the good that is in every situation, even in imperfect realities that can grow and mature. It is about seeing not the 'not' that is missing but the 'not yet'. A Church committed to accompanying children in their educational challenge, engaged couples in their search, and married couples in their first steps.

A Church is capable of pastoral discernment that is not arbitrariness but responsible action, with the ability to bring together the universal and the particular. □



## THE SAINTS, THE DECEASED AND ....HALLOWEEN

by Simone Marini  
*All Souls Day*

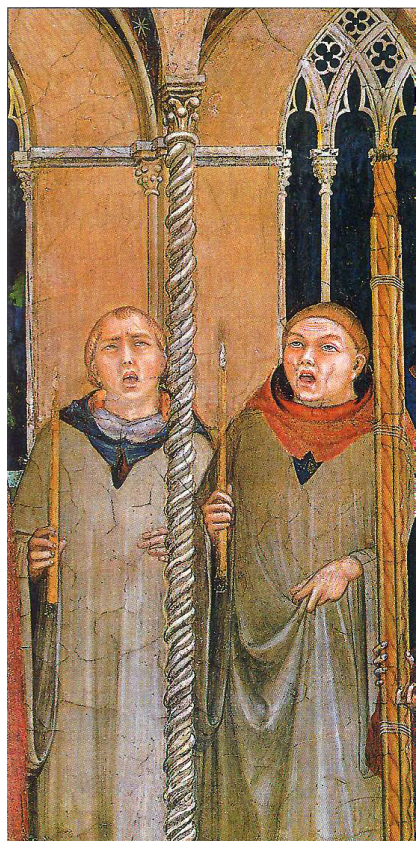
As we enter November, we often think of our departed family members, friends, and everyone we have encountered. After they have crossed the threshold of eternity, a profound silence ensues between them and us—a gentle and respectful silence because the certainty of tomorrow leads us to believe that we have bid them farewell forever, placing them in our memories to keep them alive in our hearts and through their deeds.

Many memories are combined with gratitude for having loved and received many benefits. Death is a mystery. The greatest mystery that involves everyone, with the certainty that they are not dead but alive among us because their life is only transformed.

We do not erase their names from the con-

tacts on our phones, just as those who have passed away do not leave the memories we have of them. We wish our time together would never end. Our faith sustains us. A famous writer once said, "Christianity is founded on the Resurrection; it is a fight against death." The Gospel tells

of the miraculous raising of Lazarus and the centurion's young slave and assures us of our existence in eternity. Immortality is not of this earth: the body's decay is a natural law, and this fate cannot be avoided. One cannot stop ageing; one can only delay it. According to the ancients, a vital heat in us gradually fades away. The Greeks and Romans represented the soul's flight with a light butterfly or a broken column, symbolizing the irreversible loss of something, forever out of reach.



What does one feel? What does one face when the hour of leaving arrives? An American journalist, David Snell, caught in anaphylactic shock, described the sensation as follows: "It feels stormy, but not terrifying. Each cell, before disappearing, acquires the luminosity of a supernova star. Entire galaxies are extinguished in an immense light. At the last moment, there was something else: something more beautiful, more tender, and more loving than the mind of a living being can conceive. But it is no longer there."

Once upon a time, All Saints' Day and the Commemoration of the Deceased were celebrated in church and at the cemetery. People gathered around the mysterious presence of the deceased, which, as Foscolo described, was a "correspondence of amorous senses" and held a spiritual communion for Christians. My memories of the early days of November are linked to the long procession to the cemetery, the scent of chrysanthemums, and the smell of candles burning on the marble of the graves. There were also days when chestnuts and sweet potatoes were cooked, and much was drunk. Small domestic rituals accompanied the affectionate remembrance of those no longer with us, extending it into life.

This is the season when much of the Western world celebrates Halloween, a holiday with ancient origins that has become commercialized and doesn't originally belong to our culture (in the East). But it's unsurprising for them in the West to see adults and children celebrating with

pumpkins and witch costumes. However, the world has moved on. Halloween serves as a reminder that we need to refocus on understanding death's true significance and embrace it as a crucial part of life.

Today, people usually pass away in hospitals, far from the comfort of their own homes and the familiar surroundings that had filled their lives. They are often in anonymous wards, surrounded by other sick individuals who, inadvertently and certainly unwillingly, become witnesses to someone else's passing.

Death was a different matter a century ago. It occurred within the walls of the home, and the dying person was accompanied at the most decisive stretch of their life by the people who had shared existence with them—friendly faces praying around their bed.

In some regions of Asia, cemeteries are built in the middle of towns and cities without fences so that everyone can enter and leave whenever they want. The funeral is celebrated with the coffin open so that those present can see the deceased and accompany them on their final journey. This cultural practice is a way of acknowledging death as an integral part of life and learning to be familiar with it. It is also seen as the dawn of a new day for Christians.

This doesn't take away from the profound impact of death and the lasting suffering it causes when loved ones leave us. However, it does prompt us to see death as a crucial part of life. □

## GIVING WITHOUT COUNTING

by Anastasia Dias

There was a time when I overthought before and while giving things to others.

I find myself judging others, and I find myself not being able to forgive others.

At the time, I was reminded of two parables: the parable of the speck and the log and the parable of the unforgiving servant.

You see, I have to remind myself while I'm calculating and thinking: "Hey, if people had been calculative while giving things to you, you wouldn't have been here", or while I'm judging someone: "You have also been judged and never liked it. Why then do you do that to someone else?" or 'While I'm finding it difficult to forgive someone,' "You've been forgiven on so many occasions. Why not choose to share that forgiveness with someone else?"

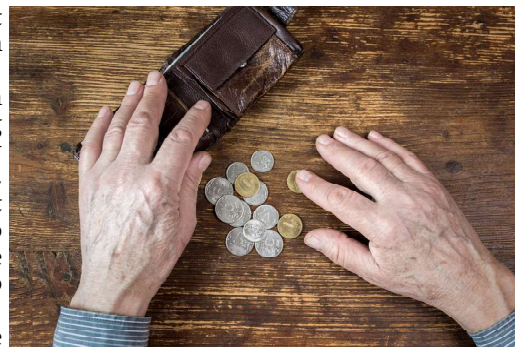
It is true that I've been given so much during my life, but especially over the past few years, that I should be the last person who thinks so much before or while giving something to someone.

People have given me

their things, time, effort, and, most of all, love. And when I have been given so much, I shouldn't hesitate to do the same for someone else.

Of course, there were times in my life when I was informed that people were judging me. At the time, I didn't instantly understand what they said. It would take me time to process it, and I would end up feeling hurt. Again, this is the reason I am trying to choose not to judge a friend, a neighbour, or a stranger.

Yes, there have been times when I've made so many mistakes. I've said mean things, done horrible things, and been a bad person, but I've been forgiven so much. First, by my parents and my family, then my friends and



sometimes even by strangers.

I should do the same for a person or people who have hurt me by their words and actions or thoughtlessly by accident.

I know, I know, it's easier said than done.

Let me tell you of a pretty dark period in my life:

When I was 17, I moved out of my hometown to college in a new city. Initially, I was alone and homesick, and I cried a lot. My roommates, who were older than me, would hear my sniffing and wake up to sit with me. Looking back, I don't remember anything about that period in my life, but the time they gave me, in the middle of the night, just listening to me. I was younger and may not have been the easiest to deal with. But I was accepted, never judged, forgiven so many times and loved so very deeply.

Today, I know how many people from different walks of life gave me their time, and this is what ultimately matters most to me.

When my mind tries to be calculative, I remind myself that I just can't because I have been given a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, poured into my lap (Luke 6:38).

First, I didn't even deserve any of that love and concern.

So, shouldn't I do that for a friend, a neighbour or a stranger?

St. Francis of Assisi states that so aptly,

"O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be



understood as to understand, to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive, in pardoning that we are pardoned, and in dying that we are born to eternal life."

The moment we start calculating, judging, and holding grudges, we're starting a new problem in the world.

The root of all our problems is selfish people who don't wish to part with what belongs to them, including their opinions, grudges or choices. I don't want to be like them.

Dear friends, you and I have a choice. Today, we can make this decision, each of us will take on and end one problem in our world. Let's begin with hunger, then poverty, then war.

How do we accomplish this?

We give ourselves entirely to our specific tasks and then to our brothers and sisters in need.

By forgiveness for everyone who has hurt us.

By love, not judgment.

The need of the hour is selflessness with a sense of abandonment.

With selflessness will follow great love, with love, forgiveness and with forgiveness, a solution for everything. □



## ACCOMPANYING LIFE

*The Salesians of Calulo in Angola run a techno-professional institute that is the model of growth and autonomy*

In 2025, the Salesian mission will celebrate 150 years since the first Salesian Missionary Expedition in Turin on 11 November 1875. The Congregation is preparing to celebrate the presence of the Sons of Don Bosco among young people and their most disadvantaged communities through initiatives and events. They are also rethinking their interventions to better address the needs of the current international scenario. The Founda-

**DON BOSCO NEL MONDO**



tion DON BOSCO NEL MONDO, as it did in 2023 and 2024, is responding to this call by contributing to the development of long-term 'pilot' interventions using the resources of the 5x1000 of income tax. These efforts focus on improving the quality of life for young people in difficulty and at risk of social exclusion.

In Angola, the Salesian Agrarian School of *Missao Santo António* in Calulo, in collaboration with the Salesian Visitation of Angola *Mond Muxi ma*, the Planning and Development Office (PD0), the local community of Don Bosco Salesians, and with technical consultancy from the Salesian Agrarian School of Lombriasco, Turin, the DON BOSCO NEL MONDO Foundation is supporting the "Agriculture for Life" project in 2024. This project aims to provide technical-professional training in primary agriculture and environmental protection to young people and youths at risk of marginalization. The funding for this project comes from the 5x1000 and focuses on promoting the efficient use of natural resources.

The project directly benefits young people and adolescents in the town of Calulo. Many of these individuals are migrants from the villages of the municipality of Libolo and do not have access to educational or quality technical-professional training that could help reduce the risk



of unemployment. 20 girls and boys between the ages of 16 and 18 are participating in basic technical-vocational training in agriculture. For them, the Calulo Agricultural School is their only opportunity for education and training, which is essential for building a secure and long-term future.

The project also benefits their families, around 240 people from segments of the population with limited access to stable income, the Salesians in the community, the primary and secondary school students, as well as individuals who receive literacy courses from the Salesians, amounting to a total of 2140 people. Additionally, the 25 novice students also indirectly benefit from the project.

### **António Avelino Pedro, 16 Years**

António Avelino Pedro is 16 years old and attends the Agricultural School of the Don Bosco Centre in Calulo. He learned

about the Agriculture for Life project at the beginning of the introductory agriculture training courses. 'I was late,' he told us when we asked him to tell us his story,' the courses had already started... I didn't want to miss this opportunity, so I spoke to a young man at the centre, Bernardo, and he, in turn, spoke to his brother, a trainer at the school and at the Salesian centre itself, about me. Thank God I was able to get into the project so that I could build a formation geared towards realising my dreams!

We asked him what it meant to participate in this project and feel involved, and he replied, 'For me, it means giving of yourself, making a contribution, but in a positive, polite, and above all, responsible way.

António talks about his life's project and how he envisions his future a few years after completing his studies and learning a trade. His main goal is to acquire a production space to sell his products in the formal market. However, what stands out the most is his concern for other young people who, like him, will encounter similar challenges. He says, "I want to assist the most vulnerable, just as the Salesian Centre has helped me and my peers."

He is confident that the Salesians in Calulo and this project can help him to realise this but emphasises how vital self-confidence is: "Just trust us and continue to support us because, thanks to God, we have very competent and responsible trainers; therefore, with their teachings, we manage not to disappoint those who support us."

The realization that we are co-



responsible, not just users of initiatives identified outside the local context, brings about the discovery of unexpected resources. This includes a newfound passion for agronomy and one's land, which can be valued and protected through the new skills and knowledge gained from a training course. This course is open to many possibilities and encourages curiosity about ecology and climate, not only in Calulo, Angola, but also in other countries and continents. When asked how participating in the Agriculture for Life project will change his life, António responds, "My life will definitely change. My living conditions will improve, as will my skills, and I will be able to enter the labour market with my products. There is not enough food...my goal is to change not only my life but also the lives of others and those who need it most."

**Irene Amélia Adão Filipe, 18 years old**

Irene, who is 18 years old, is one of the girls participating in

the Agriculture for Life project. She learned about the project through word of mouth and was very interested in it. Upon discovering that the Salesians in Calulo offered a course in essential agriculture, she immediately enrolled, despite facing some initial resistance.

Participating means engaging in positive activities, gaining knowledge about agriculture, and further developing it to become a skilled agronomist and learn more about life. Irene emphasized the importance of having educational opportunities to achieve her goals and move forward, not only with the Basic Agriculture course but also in planning for subsequent training levels.

"It is important for me to continue learning and working on various projects in life," Irene tells us firmly. She appreciates the support of the Salesians in helping her and other young people create sustainable farms and gardens to produce food independently.

Thanks to this project, Irene is discovering more about herself, including her passion for agronomy. She is effectively using this passion to take care of her land, grow crops, and produce goods to supply the local market. This is especially important as the Calulo community sometimes lacks access to the products they need.

Irene's life will be profoundly transformed by her participation in the Agriculture for Life project. She will be able to support herself, help those in need, and feel free to achieve fairer and more rewarding living conditions. □

# Witnesses in & for Our Times



**ST. JEAN-CLAUDE COLIN**

**NOVEMBER 15**

*Ian Pinto, sdb*

## THE CHURCH IN CRISIS

The French Revolution broke out in 1789 at the Estates General which was basically a gathering of representatives from the various classes or estates of society. The people of the third estate—common folk—rejected the authority of the King citing his poor administration and negligence which compounded the misery of the people. The third estate enlisted the support of the first (clergy) and second (nobility) estates in their rebellion. Those who sided with them were spared while the others were put to the sword.

When the Jacobin Government came to power, it passed a law on July 12, 1790, that required the Catholic Church to immediately surrender its autonomy to the nascent Republic. This law was termed the *Civil Constitution of the Clergy*. It aimed at bringing the Church under the control of the Government. Already earlier, a legislation had been passed confiscating the property of the Church and outlawing Religious and Monastic life. Convents and monasteries were treated as



Government property and monks and nuns were driven out and even killed.

Under such circumstances, the French Church was in serious crisis. In fact, it tottered on schism as there arose a split within the Church. On one side were the clergy who chose to remain faithful to Rome and were thus labelled seditious, and on the other side were those who renounced



allegiance to Rome and instead chose to accept the provisional Constitution.

Jean-Claude was born at this time. His family was rather large, they were nine children of which Jean-Claude was the eighth. Despite the possible threat to their family, Jean-Claude's parents were orthodox believers. They openly supported the clergy who chose to remain loyal to Rome. A testament to their bravery can be found in the fact that an arrest warrant was issued for Jean-Claude's father, Jacques Colin for supporting their parish priest. This forced the family to go on the run; their house was seized and all their belongings sold. A few years later, Jean-Claude lost his mother, who was just 37 years old when she passed and a few weeks later, lost his father too. He was barely five years old and found himself an orphan along with his siblings.

### **CONSECRATED TO GOD**

Fortunately, the Colin children were taken in by their paternal uncle, Sebastien who was a bachelor. He employed a nanny to look after the kids. This lady became a mother to the children and brought them up as her own. She was a deeply religious woman to the extent of scrupulosity. This rubbed off on the kids and especially on the impressionable Jean-Claude. While on the one hand, he developed a child-like love for God, on the other hand, he struggled with guilt over every misgiving.

While he was still a teenager, Jean-Claude entered the minor seminary accompanied by his brother. The minor seminary was

essentially a secondary boarding school for boys who had an inclination for the priesthood. For Jean-Claude, life in the seminary fit like a glove. He was not at all fazed by the disciplined lifestyle, the emphasis on obedience and the hours spent in practices of piety. He immersed himself in his studies and was among the brightest in class. Once he finished school, he decided to continue his priestly studies. Accordingly, he joined the major seminary of Saint Irenaeus at Lyon. It was in the seminary that he met his close collaborator and future co-founder, Jean-Claude Courveille.

Courveille was already a student in another seminary but was forced to transfer to Lyon because the diocese he was studying for was suppressed and its seminary occupied by the Government. Courveille had a life-changing experience that would impact not just the course of his life but also that of Colin. He had an issue with his eyesight and was gradually losing it but after praying to Our Lady of Le Puy, he was miraculously cured. In gratitude for this healing, he wanted to found a congregation dedicated to Our Lady. In his mind, the turbulent state of society and the Church in France seemed fertile ground to sprout a congregation; just as the Jesuits, who were dedicated to Jesus, rose up to defend the Church and uphold the faith during the Protestant Reformation, during the French Revolution there could arise a congregation dedicated to Mary whose members would be called Marists.

On July 22, 1816, St Irenaeus seminary saw a number of its

deacon members ordained priests. The very next day, 12 of them went to the hilltop shrine of Notre-Dame De Fourvière (an ancient chapel dedicated to Our Lady) and made a promise to found a Society of Mary. This would take some time and so, the band was dispersed to various parishes within the diocese. Jean-Claude was fortunate to be sent to the same parish that his older brother was serving in. As he carried out his responsibilities, Jean-Claude drafted the rules for the Society. His older brother became so invested in the idea that he convinced Jean-Claude to begin the Society as soon as possible. The parish they were in, Cerdon, became part of the newly formed Diocese of Belley. Jean-Claude approached the bishop and obtained permission to form the Society. Their first task was to preach missions in a backward and neglected part of the diocese.

This apostolate boosted their popularity as quite a few priests expressed their desire to join the Society. The bishop desired that the Society remain a diocesan congregation so as to remain exclusively at the service of the diocese but Jean-Claude went against his wishes and succeeded in securing Papal sanction from Gregory XVI. Thus the Society of Mary was established as an order comprising of priests and brothers bound by simple vows.

### **THE MARISTS**

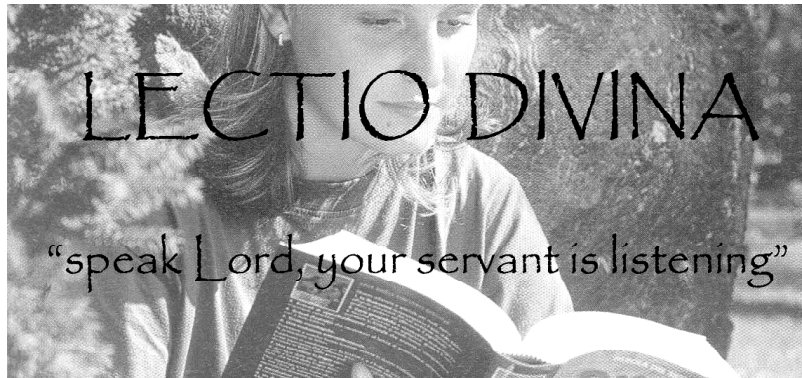
Once the Society was approved, Jean-Claude was named Superior General. Under his visionary leadership, which lasted 18 years, the society grew and flourished. They spread across France

setting up mission stations and colleges. In recognition of their commendable work and reliability, the Holy See gave them the charge of evangelizing the Vicariate of Western Oceania.

In 1817, the Colin brothers invited two young women to come to Cerdon to begin the Sisters of the Congregation of Mary. One of them would go on to become its foundress: Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn. Meanwhile, another Marist, Marcellin Champagnat set up the Brothers branch of the Society in his parish at La Valla. In 1850, Papal approval came to recognize a Lay branch of the Society as the Third Order of Mary.

In 1854, Jean-Claude resigned from the office of Superior General and spent the rest of his life revising and preparing the official text of the Constitutions of the Society. This would be the last thing he would accomplish and would remain his legacy. He died on November 15, 1875, two years after the Constitutions were definitively approved. He is currently a Venerable; his cause for beatification requires the approval of a miracle.

At present, the Marists number around 500 and are working in quite a few countries particularly in Oceania. Marist spirituality is modelled on the Blessed Virgin. They desire to live 'hidden and unknown' lives meaning to live simply and modestly while engaging in humble action. Their spirituality urges them to approach every person as they ought to approach God: "with an apron, a basin and a towel. To love and serve." Colin envisioned the Society of Mary to be to the Church of today what Mary was to the early Church. □



## JESUS' CONVERSATION WITH PILATE

Jn 18:33b-37

by Dinesh Vasava, sdb

**1. Reading:** Take a few moments to read the Gospel passage slowly and attentively. Pay attention to the details of the conversation between Jesus and Pilate. Try to understand the significance of their exchange and the truth that Jesus proclaims.

**2. Meditation:** Ponder on the message of the passage. Consider the significance of Jesus being questioned by Pilate about His kingship. Reflect on Jesus' response, where He explains that His kingdom is not of this world. What does this conversation reveal about the nature of Jesus' kingship and the values of His kingdom? Allow me to share a small reflection.

John 18:33b-37 describes Jesus' interaction with Pilate during his trial before his crucifixion. Pilate questions Jesus about whether he is the King of the Jews. Jesus asks if Pilate answered the question alone or if others informed him..

Jesus also adds that he had come to testify to the truth. Pilate an-

wers the famous question, "What is truth?" However, Pilate does not wait for an answer and goes out to address the Jews, declaring that Jesus is not guilty.

This passage highlights the difference between Jesus' kingdom and earthly kingdoms. Jesus'



kingdom is based on different principles and values, not concerned with worldly power or dominance, but with truth and personal spiritual transformation. Jesus' response challenges Pilate's perception of truth. When Pilate asks, "What is truth?" it shows scepticism or a disregard for absolute truth. Jesus, as the embodiment of truth, offers an alternative viewpoint, inviting Pilate and others to seek and embrace the truth he proclaims. After reflecting on this passage, we may wonder about the nature of Jesus' kingship, the purpose of his mission, and the value of truth.

Pope Francis often emphasizes humility, service, and the true nature of Christ's kingship in his reflections on John 18:33b-37. In this passage, Jesus tells Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world," emphasizing that His reign is built on truth and love rather than earthly power.

The Pope has reflected on how, as a king, Jesus serves others rather than attempting to dominate. He frequently emphasizes the importance of leaders being servants to their people, following Jesus' example. This powerful concept of servant leadership, central to Pope Francis' teachings, is a source of inspiration for all and is endorsed when he said: "When did Jesus reveal himself as king? In the event of the Cross! Those who look at the Cross cannot but see the astonishing gratuitousness of love. One of you could say, "Father, that was a failure!". It is precisely in the failure of sin. sin is a failure in the failure of human ambitions: the triumph of the Cross is there; the gratuitous-

ness of love is there. In the failure of the Cross, love is seen, a love that is gratuitous, which Jesus gives us. (Angelus, 22 Novembre 2015)" Through this same love we all of us are called to lead our lives with compassion, humility, and a concern for the wellbeing of others and spread the love of Christ in our fellow human being.

**3. Prayer:** Engage in a conversation with God. Share your thoughts, feelings, and questions that arise from the passage. Thank God for Jesus, the true King and Lord of all. Ask for the grace to recognize and submit to His kingship. Pray for wisdom to understand the values of His kingdom and live according to them. Seek guidance on proclaiming and witnessing the truth of Christ's kingship in the world.

**4. Contemplation:** Take a moment to be silent and still. Let the words and images of the Gospel passage sink into your heart. Imagine yourself as a witness to the conversation between Jesus and Pilate. Think about how you can acknowledge and honour Jesus as your King. Consider how you can align your life with the values of His kingdom. Rest in God's presence, allowing Him to speak to you beyond words.

**5. Action:** Consider how you can apply the message of this passage to your own life. Reflect on any areas where you need to surrender to Jesus' kingship and align your life with His values. How can you proclaim and witness to the truth of Christ's kingship in your words and actions? Commit to taking action based on the insights you have gained. □



# Quiet Spaces

## HIS CONSOLATION IS CLOSE, TRUE AND OPENS DOORS OF HOPE

*Pope Francis' homily (edited) at Domus Sanctae Marthae on Friday, May 8, 2020*

### Introduction

Today is the World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day. Let us pray for those people who work in these meritorious institutions. May the Lord bless their work that does so much good.

### Homily

This conversation between Jesus and the disciples again takes place at the table, during Supper (see Jn 14:1-6). Jesus is sad, and all His followers are sad: Jesus said that He would be betrayed by one of them (see Jn 13:21) and they all perceive that something bad would happen. Jesus begins to console them, because one of the tasks, the jobs of the Lord is to console. The Lord consoles His disciples and here we see Jesus's way of consoling. We have many ways of consoling, from the most authentic, from the closest, to the most formal, such as telegrams of condolences: Profoundly saddened by... That does not console anyone, it is false, the consolation of formality. But how does the Lord console? It is important to know this, because when we go through sad moments in our life, we too learn to perceive what is the true consolation of the Lord.

And in this Gospel passage we see that the Lord always consoles with His closeness, through truth and hope. They are the three paths of the consolation of the Lord.

In closeness, never distant: I am here. These beautiful words: I am here. I am here, with you. And very often, in silence. But we know that He is there. He is always there. That closeness that is God's style, even in the Incarnation, making Himself close to us. The Lord consoles in closeness. And He does not use empty words; on the contrary, He prefers silence. The strength of closeness, in presence. He speaks little, but He is close.

A second path of Jesus's closeness, of Jesus's way of consoling, is the truth: Jesus is truthful. He does not say formal things that are lies: No, be calm, everything will pass, nothing will happen, it will pass, things come to an end... No. He tells the truth. He does not hide the truth. Because He Himself in this passage says, I am the truth (see Jn 14:6). And the truth is, I will go, that is, I will die (see vv. 2-3). We are faced with death. It is the truth. And He says it so simply and gently, without causing harm. But we are right before His death. He does not hide the truth.

And this is the third way. Jesus consoles with hope. Yes, this is a bad moment, but do not let your hearts be troubled. ... Have faith also in me (v. 1). I will tell you something, Jesus says, in my Father's

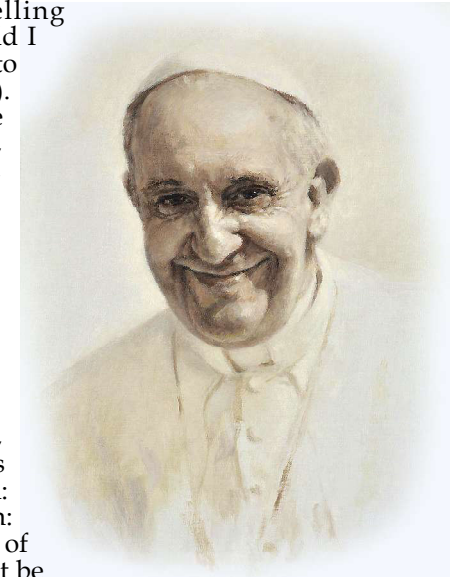
house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? (v. 2). He is the first to go and open the doors, the doors to that place, through which we will all pass, at least we hope. I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be (v. 3). The Lord returns every time that one of us is departing from this world. I will come, I will take you with me: hope. He will come and take us by the hand, and bring us with Him. He does not say, No, you will not suffer, it's nothing... No. He tells the truth: I am near you. This is the truth: it is a bad moment, of danger, of death. But do not let your heart be troubled, stay in that peace, that peace that is the basis of every consolation. Because I will come and I will take you by hand when I will be.

It is not easy to allow ourselves to be comforted by the Lord. Very often, in bad moments, we get angry with the Lord and we do not allow Him to come to speak to us like this, with this tenderness, with this closeness, with this gentleness, with this truth and with this hope.

Let us ask the grace to learn to let ourselves be comforted by the Lord. The consolation of the Lord is true, it does not deceive. It is not anaesthesia, no. But He is close, He is true, and He opens the doors to hope.

### Spiritual Communion

Those who cannot receive Communion can now make a spiritual communion. My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if you were already there, and I unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. ☐



## THE STORY OF A FRIENDSHIP

By Pierluigi Menato, Tr. Ian Doulton, sdb

Helena sat at the little coffee table that served as her letter-writing desk: the light from the lamp framed her face in gold as she bent over that white sheet of letter-paper and wrote to her friend:

*"Dear Irene, I had to share my joy with you. Tonight, I couldn't stay in bed because my mind was still filled with the incredible sight of a packed theatre, a wonderful orchestra, thunderous applause, and an outpouring of flowers while I was on stage. I put so much of myself into the performance that my singing seemed effortless and filled with clarity. Even now, in the silence of the night, I can still feel the resonance of my soul singing to me. It sings of the dream of art and glory, a life filled with both anxiety and achievement. I wanted to share my joy with you at all costs. I couldn't lie peacefully in bed to-night – I had to share my joy with you. My eyes are still dazzled by the fantastic vision of a packed theatre, a wonderful orchestra, thunderous applause, and a shower of flowers while I expressed my gratitude on stage. I felt I deserved this triumph because I invested so much in the leading part that my soul poured into my singing with such ease and clarity that it amazed me. And now, in the silence that surrounds me, I can still feel my soul singing. It sings of its dream of art and glory, a beautiful life lived trembling with anxieties and crowned with laurels.*

*"Do you remember when I told you of my dreams while we were at boarding school, and you smiled? I'd hoped that I had won you over to my ideal when, like me (or perhaps even*



*more than me), you received sincere applause and 'encores' on the stage in that little convent auditorium. However, your strong aspirations for a quiet, family life led you down another path, away from me. And to think, my Irene, that I could not resign myself to living like you, with a husband to serve and children to cradle. Sometimes, I wish I could relieve you of your burdens, take you outside those four walls to experience the great world, where you are admired and courted without being enslaved, and associate your successes with mine to be famous equals.*

*"If I have one sorrow, it is this: to be without you, dear friend. To walk this flowery path and, in the brief pauses when I am not overwhelmed*

*by the applause of the crowd, to feel a little lonely in this great and beautiful home of mine, but empty of your affection. Miss Dorothy's company is very minimal. To her, I am always the 'child' to be looked after, the orphan and wealthy heiress entrusted to her by her guardian uncle. Despite her somewhat rigid maternity, she always remains the governess. Though sincere and trustworthy, I would never share my secrets with her."*

*"Back to us, dearest, about your dear Helena then? Does she seem well on her way to becoming a diva? I desire your praise and encouragement. I already anticipate the satisfaction, not to mention the pleasure your letters have always given me. This correspondence, which began with our separation, has become a mutual need; do you think so?"*

*"I know that you do not omit one of my gushes, and I smile a little at your excessive preoccupation with weighing every word to reply to me in kind and relative points of meditation... You poor dear! You never tire of preaching to the wind, especially regarding faith and religion, which, I confess for me, are past and forgotten. But in a way to console you, I wish you at least to be more fortunate in winning me over, with much love, your loving HELENA.*

*Irene's reply came as promptly and as faithfully as ever.*

*"Helena, my friend, I love you so much but I haven't found the time to write to you. It appears that Alberto, my little angel whom I've just put in his cradle, has sensed his mother's wish. He has wonderfully calmed down and is already asleep with his little fists closed and his lips forming a smile, showing his first*

*little teeth. I wish you could see him, then you would agree that my 'housebound captivity' is sweet and that I, too, have my share of happiness.*

*"It's a matter of taste, dear Helena, or rather a vocation. Every state has, of course, its joys but also its thorns. But when one has learned to bear them with love, patience, and serene acceptance of what is inevitable, then even the painful path is smoothed out, and duty becomes gentle.*

*"I see you slightly above the clouds, Helena. So, despite your repeated resolutions to stop sounding like a preacher, I'm about to give you a sermon. But now I've descended and I'm sitting next to you. Let's have a conversation face-to-face like good friends.*

*"Thank you for your trust. I understand you completely, and that's why I love you. If you were here, I would hold you close to my heart so tenderly that even Alberto would be jealous. I don't know any other way to erase that vague sense of emptiness that casts a shadow on your happiness.*

*"Do you notice the paradoxes of love? I would be just as content if this void in your heart gradually transformed into a persistent anxiety, a desperate craving for greater and essential things, a relentless pursuit of infinity that, even in the midst of hardships, would unfailingly guide you towards a destination beyond your aspirations for success and fame. They're not bad things... are they, Helena? Yet only when I know you have reached that summit, would I be so glad for your happiness.*

*"Every time you share your joys with me, or when I hear about your undeniable fame as an artist thro-*



ugh the newspapers, my heart trembles a little. It's not that I doubt your eventual success - I see it as being complete. But it's precisely because of this, and without considering myself immune to life's unforeseen events, that I fear.

I know that waking up from a dream as wonderful as yours when reality that brings pain tomorrow would be just as bitter for you, my dear, as it would be for those of us who have taken an ordinary path without extraordinary illusions.

"I also want to tell you the wish with which you close your letter is the most beautiful one you could have made me. To win you over, and what's more, to succeed without being pedantic, without letting you discover my battle plan... I have yet to come up with one, but it is something to look for. It is an assault at the moment."

"Meanwhile, here is Alberto, already waking up and waving his little hands. The little "tyrant" knows how to measure my time with mathematical precision. He has also learnt the mischief of leaning over the edge so that the fright of a tumble makes me rush immediately to his commands. But you are used to these abrupt conclusions in my letters. I embrace you, my diva, and I look forward to rereading your letter soon. IRENE

\*\*\*

Thus, the diligent correspondence between Helena and Irene persisted for years, nurturing their precious friendship.

Alberto, now a small sixth-grade student, was sweating over his math exercises in the quiet living room where the rhythmic pendulum marked the passage of time. In the background, his

mother took a moment of peace, as her soul, shaken and impressed by recent events, needed it so much.

A pile of letters on her lap, all written in the same somewhat unusual handwriting and signed with the same signature, pieced together the story of her beloved Helena. Who could have foreseen the premature end of such a vibrant young life? The changes and worries she endured, and the dreams left unfulfilled for that passionate soul, cut down just as she reached the pinnacle of her success.

The last letters came from a nursing home in Milan. Re-reading them now, Irene relived Helena's intimate tragedy, the revolt of her whole being against what she called 'the fatality of fate!' the terror of the disease that was making its inexorable slaughter and, almost, the resentment against those fervent admirers who, by abandoning her, were hurting her with their fake good wishes.

Then, the memories suddenly softened.... A piece of blue sky, a wave of radiant sunshine, had come to her like the Lord's blessing. Irene thanked Him infinitely for having inspired her with a brilliant Christian idea at the right time, right there in that living room, at that little desk on which she had tortured herself in vain to write a letter to Helena. This letter would give her some serenity. She felt that every word was empty of meaning, that nothing answered the pressing need of that spirit exasperated by misfortune. And it was then that, almost instinctively, she took from her bookcase a small poc-

ket-Gospel and, with an affectionate dedication, sent it to her poor friend, sure that from those pages, she would draw the relief that could only come from the Word of God.

She kept praying and she waited.

Her friend answered less frequently now; the effort fatigued her. A simple "thank you" for the book she had received expressed a heartfelt regret about her fleeting life, a regret so deep that it tore at her soul—so much so that Irene decided to visit her and embrace her once again.

But then the news arrived that Helena's last letter had surfaced among the others, almost glowing with comfort. She took it back, kissed it, and reread what her dear friend had written.

"...You've won, Irene; you won with that gentle weapon of affection that suggested the miraculous remedy, the only one that could fill my poor, torn, bleeding heart with comfort. About a month ago, after crying desolately for hours on end in this black solitude of mine, I remembered, I don't know why, your little book. I opened it absentmindedly, wandering here and there with the pessimism that now haunted my every feeling. My attention, however, immediately stopped on a passage, every word of which imbued my soul with a sudden hope, an infinite sweetness: "... I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall not thirst. All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and whosoever cometh to me shall not be rejected: for I am come down from heaven to do



not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. The will of Him who sent me demands that I lose nothing of what was given me but that I raise it on the last day. For this is the will of my Father who sent me, that whoever sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him at the last day (Jn 6, 35ff).

"Ah, my dear, I have devoutly reread that passage of the Gospel and the other verses in preparation for the days of dreariness. It was a great comfort. I then approached a priest who was directing me. I can now peacefully surrender to the fact of losing this fragile mortal existence in order to live a true life! Thank you for your gift: it all started from there. Will you come, my dearest friend, to receive my last grateful kiss?"

Irene now relived the emotion of that profound meeting entirely. She had stood by her until the end; her Helena had seen the immense joy of her renewed faith in her dying and peaceful gaze.

The memory aroused a very soft cry in her. Alberto looked at her, amazed, and in one leap, was in her lap, wrapping his arms around her neck in a tender embrace.

"What's wrong, Mama? Are you crying?" "Yes, my love, but they are tears of great comfort." □

## FIORETTI OF DON BOSCO - 58

by Michele Molineris

### 256. Get your certificate (1880)

Wonders kept coming in greater numbers 1880. Astonishing things took place in a girls' convent school of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. The boarders were all gathered in a hall to welcome Don Bosco. HE came in, saying very amiably, "You are waiting for Don Bosco, aren't you? Well, here I am!" Directly behind him came a poor woman who was carrying a little girl who had no strength in her legs. The woman had gone to find Don Bosco at the convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, where he had been visiting moments before, and so had followed him to his next appointment. Boldly pushing her way into the hall, she placed her daughter before Don Bosco and implored him to give the girl his blessing. Don Bosco did so and told her to have trust in Mary, Help of Christians. Then he ordered her to walk. At first, she hesitated for fear of falling, and her mother darted forward to help her, but Don Bosco stopped her, saying, "She needs no help." Then he told the girl, "Get up and go to the chapel, tearfully followed by several people. Father Cagliero, who was present, saw her leave the convent, walking all by herself and merely leaning on her mother's arm.

Now let us return to the boarders. When the excitement was over, two girls who had been waiting for the right moment welcomed Don Bosco officially. The younger one gave him a bouquet

of flowers with many tiny envelopes holding half francs – a donation for his work. The older girl read a speech welcoming him in the name of the superiors and her schoolmates. He listened to the formal address and then spoke to the whole community. Afterward those who wished had time to receive some brief advice from him.

After the reception, each of the pupils preparing for certification as teachers was presented to him individually. Don Bosco assured them all that they would pass the exam with top grades. When one girl who was taking the test for a higher degree came to him, he opened the book she was holding and, without saying a word, pointed out something to her. The girl who had formally welcomed him moments before, whose name was Aiguier, wished to become a sister of the Immaculate Conception, but as a cloistered nun, so as to give herself to the contemplative life. The mother general, however, was against the idea, insisting that she take her degree and be a teaching sister. Holding to her resolve, the young lady refused to take the exams and confided her hope to Don Bosco. He gave her a glance she could never forget, and at random opened Meneket's *Littérature* for her, saying, "You will never become a nun and you will need a job. Take the exams. You'll do extremely well. Your teacher certification will come handy someday."

Mademoiselle Aiguier still residing at Marseille [in 1933], recounted this event, saying that Don Bosco's glance seemed to tell her that while she would never

become a nun, she would nevertheless always live like one. She also added that then and there his remark, "You will never become a nun" had vexed her considerably.

Everything happened as he had foretold. At the exams the page which Don Bosco had pointed out was the one chosen. Among the candidates, Mademoiselle Aiguier received the highest grades and all her classmates did better than everyone else. The girl who took the test for a higher degree was interrogated precisely on the page which Don Bosco had pointed out and received excellent marks. Mademoiselle Aiguier did not become a nun, though her confessor was somewhat sceptical about Don Bosco's prediction. Being the daughter of a wealthy merchant family, she looked forward to a comfortable life, with no need to teach, but suddenly the family's fortunes unexpectedly plunged. An ill-fated business transaction ended in bankruptcy, and she began her painful career as a school teacher. Thanks to the certification she had providentially obtained, she was able to help her family in their need. She had received some excellent marriage proposals when life had been easier, but she declined all offers. At this date [1933] she lives alone like a cloistered nun. (BM XIV p 321-322)

### 258. She had better die, because her mother would not educate her.

During Don Bosco's stay in Rome in 1880, the procurator witnessed a precise prediction and its fulfilment. A letter reached Don

Bosco from France in which a lady begged him to send a blessing to her only daughter who was seriously ill.

"Here's a lady," Don Bosco said to Fr Dalmazzo, "who would like special prayers from me for the healing of her two-year-old daughter. But what should I answer her? Her daughter will certainly die.

"It's a tough thing to have to give such an answer," Fr Dalmazzo observed.

"You answer her!"

"What shall I tell her?"

"Write to her that I will pray for her to do God's holy will, resigning herself to whatever God has in store for her."

Fr Dalmazzo wrote the letter, softening the expression by exhorting the lady to be resigned to God's will in everything and assuring her that in the meantime prayers would be said.

The lady was able to read between the lines; she immediately sent a telegram to Don Bosco, in which she renewed her request for prayers and stated that a letter would follow.

Fr Dalmazzo presented the telegram to Don Bosco, asking him what was to be answered.

"No reply," said Don Bosco.

And then the letter arrived. The poor mother, almost delirious at the thought of losing her daughter, wanted her absolutely cured by Don Bosco's prayers. Don Dalmazzo once more waited to see what she had to answer.

"No answer," Don Bosco repeated. "She would not know how to educate that little girl; so, it's better for her soul that she should die.

Not five days had elapsed



before a telegram announced the little girl's death (M.B., XIV, 478).

### 259. An ally for mothers (1880)

On 17 February 1880 Fr Cagliero wrote to Fr Rua: 'Marseille est bouleversée, and its bustle, its enthusiasm and transport to see Don Bosco reminds me of what happened in Rome in 1864, when the same thing happened there, as is happening here. This extraordinary concourse of people, great and small, rich and poor, religious and secular, is growing and increasing every day.

As all the needs described above had received great benefits, the departure from Marseille had to be postponed until Sunday.

Marseilles is a city of great wealth, great faith, and great need. I am not exaggerating when I say that, if time permitted, Don Bosco would be able to do there what the prophet Jonah did in Nineveh.

At his feet, even the most hardened sinners, vain women, and lukewarm religious were moved to tears. What's truly remarkable is the transformation of closed purses, previously indifferent to the needs of the poor, into open vessels of Christian charity and beneficence.

Don Bosco arrived in France on January 14th and was in Marseilles from January 19th. According to a letter from Fr. Ronchail dated January 30th, the situation was not as positive during the first week: "A lot of enthusiasm, but no money." It was after Don Bosco's plea to Our Lady, "Up we go!" that the situation changed, and the challenges seemed overwhelming for him and his secretaries.

Among the many remarkable

events that occurred in collaboration with Our Lady on that occasion, there is one that stands out for its blend of spiritual and material significance, as well as the intense emotions involved. This particular event involves a father who had fallen from grace, his unhappy son, and a devoted and selfless woman whose role was crucial in this story.

In Marseilles, a woman approached Don Bosco and expressed deep regret that her husband was an unbeliever and that one of her five-year-old children was unable to speak. Don Bosco comforted her, assuring her that he would pray for her husband's conversion and her son's recovery. He also advised her to pray the customary novena to Mary Help of Christians.

When she returned home, she told her husband that she had seen Don Bosco. In response, her husband shouted that Don Bosco was a priest and that he did not believe in priests. He also mixed blasphemies against God and imprecations against his wife. Once the anger had died down, they went to lunch.

During the conversation, the lady mentioned that she had recommended her son's recovery to Don Bosco, but her husband shrugged it off. Suddenly, at that very moment, the little boy gave a cry: "Papa, papa!" It was the first time they had heard his voice. This miraculous event sparked a profound change in the husband's heart, transforming his disbelief into awe and gratitude.

The father, shaken but not overcome, became tender, got up from the table, and locked himself in his room. The following day, he

went to visit Don Bosco and frankly declared to him that it was repugnant to priests.

With his characteristic patience and understanding, Don Bosco responded, "If you cannot accept me as a priest, then consider me a friend." He then proceeded to gently guide the father, who was still reeling from the previous day's miracle, until the man, charmed by Don Bosco's kindness, surrendered his resistance.

As the conversation drew to a close, the father, now a believer, made a heartfelt confession. Don Bosco, with his characteristic understanding, bid him farewell. As the father left, he left a generous offering in Don Bosco's hands, a symbol of his newfound faith. (from M.B., XIV, 417).

### 260. The Abbé Bonhomme! (1880)

One day in 1880 Do Bosco was in Nice when he took a public coach, and when he got to his stop, he realised that he had taken no money. He told the coachman that he had left his wallet at home and asked him kindly to St. Pierre's Hospice, and there he would be paid his fare.

"Whom should I ask for?" the man inquired.

"Ask for me."

"What's your name?"

"The good abbot!"

The coachman drove there toward evening. Don Bosco had forgotten to notify anyone, so that when the man was asked whom he wished to see, he replied as he had been told. "We have no Abbé Bonhomme here," the secretary said, rather annoyed, and showed him the door. The coachman raised his voice, so that

Don Bosco heard the commotion and, understanding what it was all about, rushed over. "There is Abbé Bonhomme!" exclaimed the coachman in triumph. With a hearty laugh Don Bosco paid him and added a generous tip." (MB XIV)

### 261. Earthquake at the Vatican! (1880)

A group of French pilgrims was in Rome during Holy Week. On the morning of March 24, while calling on Cardinal Nina with Father Dalmazzo, Don Bosco found the cardinal's waiting room crowded with pilgrims, among them a group of ladies and gentlemen from Marseille who instantly recognized him and in one voice greeted him with, "It's Don Bosco!" All rushed forward to meet him, falling to their knees and asking for his blessing. Astounded by this sudden welcome, Don Bosco stepped back and excused himself, saying that no priest was allowed to give his blessing in that place, since this was the Pope's prerogative. However, they kept insisting on his blessing. We have to remark that in rushing toward Don Bosco and dropping to their knees the pilgrims had so shaken the floor that people above and in the adjoining rooms felt the tremor. Several monsignors came downstairs to investigate. Even the cardinal looked in and, touched by this singular display, told Don Bosco, "Please bless them or they will never rise to their feet." Don Bosco complied. (MB XIV) □



## “DO WHATEVER HE TELLS YOU”

by Fr Giuseppe Quadrio

**M**ary's last words, as reported by the Gospels, were spoken at the wedding feast of Cana in order to ensure that the celebration of two young newlyweds would not be marred. Her voice was crucial and decisive on that day of suffering and expectation of everyone, ensuring that the feast would never be disrupted.

The last words spoken by Mary in the Gospel were at the wedding feast of Cana and marked the solemn inauguration of Jesus' miraculous work.

They were probably relatives, and therefore, among those invited to the wedding were also Mary and Jesus, who, to honour the joy of the bride and groom, did not disdain to sit with them at the table, without false reserve, without unconventional austerity. Magnificent lesson for some sour cat who sees in every smile an immodesty, in every laugh intemperance, in every joy a sin. Jesus and Mary were sanctified and almost deified that day, with pure love, serene and dignified pleasure, and honest and com-

posed fun. Simplicity, ease, condescension towards one's neighbour: these were the virtues that shone in Mary: virtues that are humble, unassuming, discreet; virtues that go about on foot and wear everyday clothes, without costumes and stripes.

In the midst of the banquet, Mary, with her attentive eye, noticed that the wine, the key element of the feast, is about to run out.

Just realizing this reveals to us how much Mary's soul shows that not everyone is able to see, understand, or comprehend their neighbour's situation!

The second lesson we learn from this Gospel passage is understanding.

Mary realized and understood the embarrassment and humiliation that the young couple would have experienced if the diners had noticed. The poor young couple would have become the talk of the town, and a shadow would have always veiled the memory of the best day of their lives. What should she do? Keep quiet and let it pass? Say, "It's not my problem"? Mary would never

utter these words; she feels and suffers every misery of others as her own.

Compassion, understanding the sufferings of others and empathizing with them, is another characteristic of Mary's soul and a lesson for us.

She turns to Jesus, who sits beside her, and caresses him with her motherly gaze. She says, "They have no more wine!"

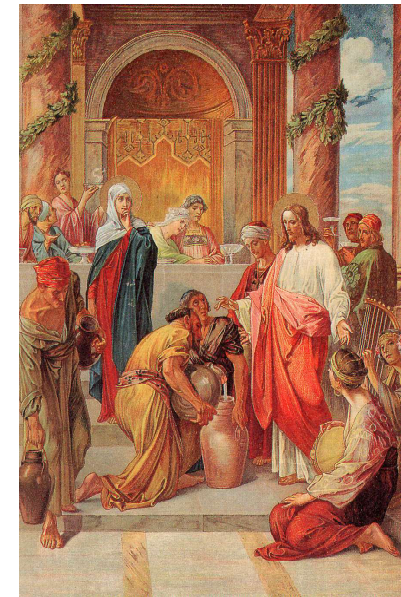
"They have no wine!" These four words are a masterpiece of prayer. Mary's entire soul shines through in these words: her crystal-clear faith in the omnipotence of Jesus, her unlimited trust in the goodness of her son, her enchanting simplicity and sobriety in speaking and praying, and above all, her motherly compassionate concern for those who suffer and those who have none.

The four words express sadness, reveal a wish, and subtly request a miracle from the Virgin, who understands her son well enough not to insist on the plea.

Once again, Jesus' response may seem harsh and scathing, leading interpreters to engage in extensive analysis. The phrase, typically Semitic, can be translated as: "What does this have to do with you and me? My time has not yet come, the time for performing miracles."

The hour of miracles in the divine economy's plan had yet to arrive. Jesus had not officially begun his work as a preacher and healer. So why did his mother ask him for a miracle?

The assurance of a mother Jesus' words may seem unclear to us today, but to the Virgin Mary, they held a deeper meaning. She had the advantage



of hearing the tone, seeing the gestures, and feeling the love behind Jesus' words. This allowed her to understand the true sense of his message, even when it seemed like a gentle refusal to her prayers. Jesus' voice likely carried an invitation to trust, even beneath its apparent severity.

And Mary, with the confidence and boldness that only a mother is allowed, calmly told the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

She knew that her son would have pleased her, she knew that for her He would have anticipated the yet to come hour of miracles, she knew that He was all-powerful over her heart.

And Jesus performed the miracle, transforming the water from the amphorae into wine. He obeyed his Mother, who had to do sweet violence to God's own will, hastening his intervention.

The Evangelist concludes that



this was the first miracle of Jesus, through which his messianic status was revealed, and the disciples believed in him. Mary's actions led to the first glorification of the Messiah and the first conscious acceptance, opening heaven to Jesus' public mission and hastening him towards the time determined by Providence.

Just as it was Mary who gave him to humanity, who handed him - as soon as he was born - to the first Jews and Gentiles who went to worship him, it was also she who left him to begin his public ministry and who facilitated his acceptance by the first believers.

By his hands, therefore, came to humanity the best gifts of the heavenly Father and his incarnate Son.

Just as at Cana, she sat beside her Son, imploring that illustrious miracle from Him. In heaven, she sits as Queen beside the throne of the King, her Son, as Mediatrix, Help of Christians, and our Advocate before Him. And as Mary's voice was that day, almighty over the heart of her Son, so that same voice in heaven continues to speak to him for our needs of soul and body, time and eternity.

An insinuating and humble yet irresistible voice to which God cannot deny anything.

What God can do with a command Mary can do with prayer.

The omnipotence of God is entrusted to the very heart of our Mother. What could be more comforting for our misery and poverty? **Mother of the Forsaken**

The evocative words of Victor Hugo come to mind. *"The mother: I have a Mother for little that I am. Do you know what it is to have a mother? Do you have one? Do you know what it is to be a child, a poor*

*child, weak, naked, miserable, hungry, alone in the world, and to feel that you have a mother near you and above you who walks when you walk, stops when you stop, smiles when you cry... - No, you do not yet know what a Mother is - she is an Angel, who watches you, who teaches you to speak, who teaches you to read, who teaches you to love. - Who warms your fingers in her hands, your body on her knees, your soul in her heart! - Who gave you her milk when you were small, her bread when you were older, her life always! To whom you say: Mother! And who answers: Son! in such a sweet manner, that these two words rejoice God!"* (Angel, Act I).

If any mother's heart is an abyss of forbearance and goodness, what about Mary's? No particular title is needed to present oneself to her; after all, the most effective title is the misery and poverty of her children.

In Valencia, Spain, the inhabitants venerate a statue entitled "Nuestra Señora de los Desamparados" (Our Lady of the Forsaken). They call that Madonna of theirs 'the stoop,' so much so that the Virgin has made a habit of stooping down towards her abandoned children.

Stooping maternally over us, her hands full of graces: here is Mary. No one ever turns to her in vain. We trustingly raise our prayers and pleas to the mother of mercy, life, sweetness, and hope, knowing that she will never forsake us.

We, the exiled children of Eve, groan and weep in this valley of tears, turning to her, sighing that she may turn those merciful eyes upon us and show us the blessed fruit of her womb, Jesus, after this exile. So be it!" □



AFM Salesians play a crucial role in assisting young people to establish a strong foundation for their future through education, vocational training, and comprehensive support.

### How did your vocation come about?

Who would have thought that I would be called to be a Salesian? I was born in a country of Oblates, in an environment of Oblates, and with a parish priest of Oblates. It is clear that the influence on my vocation was oriented towards Oblates. Why not be an Oblate, then? Mary Immaculate and Bartholomew Garelli (I would be Garelli) are perhaps a common factor between the Salesians of Don Bosco and the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

When I was young, I was very

## MY VOCATION STORY

### FR. LINGOANE TLAILE

In charge of the community of Lesoto

by Vaclav Klement

interested in serving the church at the parish level and being actively involved in every possible way. However, I did not think much about a religious vocation. In 2000, I had the chance to accompany a friend to an unfamiliar parish in Leribe, at St. Luke. Although it was unclear what it would entail, it was no problem for us to participate as altar boys on weekends for anything related to religious activities.

It was the first time I had heard of the Salesians, the first time I had seen an Indian priest (Fr Joy), the first time I had fun with priests and brothers, and the first time I was in an oratory! It was around March or April in St. Luke's Maputsoe. Although there were about 30 of us, I could feel a personal approach from the Salesians and novices of that community. However, I was not convinced that the Salesians were Catholic religious priests. Their approach was so personal and friendly, and I was not used to this approach by priests. After writing our personal stories based on Don Bosco's dream at nine, we chatted with Fr. Jonathan Dan-



iels. Not expecting this to happen, I wrote some things I would not have written if I had known they would be read. However, I also went because everyone was going, and I was afraid they would guess what I had written if I did not want to meet Fr. Jonathan. To my surprise! I felt at home, at peace, loved and accepted as I was.

I left the seminar without intending to return because I felt out of place as my friend was the only familiar face among the participants.

### How was your Salesian vocational growth?

Over the years, I have experienced a renewed sense of empathy, a deeper spirituality, and a profound appreciation for the Salesian mission in the lives of young people. This has strengthened my dedication to walking alongside my confreres, inspiring and guiding young people with love and compassion, even in challenging circumstances. The past four years have shaped my Salesian vocation and nurtured my passion and commitment to uplifting the lives of young people, even amidst the uncertainties and difficulties caused by the pandemic. This time has been a period of immense learning, growth, and strengthening of the meaning of my journey as a Salesian of Don Bosco.

### What is your dream for the Salesians of the Vice Province of AFM?

The AFM Salesians aspire to create thriving communities where young people feel empowered, supported, and inspired to realize their full potential. Our vision is to establish a vibrant



network of Salesian communities that serve as beacons of hope, providing education, mentoring, and nurturing new vocations. In this vision, AFM Salesians are deeply rooted in the lives of young people, offering guidance, love, and support to those who may face challenges or adversity. These Salesian communities serve as safe havens, fostering a sense of belonging and equipping young people with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive in a rapidly changing world. We dream of communities where Salesians are seen as custodians of hope, guiding young people on a path of self-discovery, resilience, and empowerment. Through education, vocational training, and holistic support, AFM Salesians play a crucial role in helping young people build a solid foundation for their future."

My ultimate dream is for AFM Salesians to be catalysts for positive change, nurturing a generation of compassionate, responsible, and visionary leaders who will make a difference in their communities and beyond as 'good Christians and upright citizens'. I aspire to create a legacy of hope, love, and opportunity for the youth of Eswatini, Lesotho, and the Republic of South Africa. □

## IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

### Ancestry

It is said that King Edward once came upon one of his grandsons with a book in his hand, and asked him what he was reading.

"Studying about Perkin Warbeck," was the reply.

"And who was he?" asked the king trying to test the boy's knowledge.

"Oh," answered the young prince, "he pretended he was the son of a king, but he wasn't. He was the son of respectable parents."

### Sound advice

A portly lady in a bus, had accidentally taken a rear seat reserved for smokers. With unconcealed disgust she watched the man beside her fill his pipe. As he prepared to strike a match, she said frigidly: "Sir, smoke always make me feel sick!"

"Does it?" said the man, after the first puff, "then take my advice, Lady, don't smoke."

### I told you

Dad and mum went to the Parish Priest for information about the future son-in-law. The priest was quick and to the point:

- Well all I can tell you is that he does not know the value of work, he's a poor player and he can't bear alcohol.

Reassured, the parents gave their consent for the marriage.

Very soon, they realized that the son-in-law was a lazy bones, as there ever was one. He was a poor gambler and always lost. And when drunk would beat up their

daughter.

They went to the priest to complain: "Father, you of all people ...You cheated us...That fellow is a scoundrel!"

"That's what I tried to tell you," he answered. "I told you he did not know the value of work; too costly for him. He did not know how to play...that's why he always loses, and he can't bear alcohol. When he drinks does not know what he does..."

### Starting

Holding up a pair of antique candlesticks, an auctioneer said:

"Give me a start."

"Fifty cents!" Came a voice from the crowd.

"What!" cried the horrified auctioneer.

"Ah!" said the bidder, "you wanted a start. I gave it to you!"

### Courage

"What are you anyway?" shouted the wife during the quarrel. "A man or a mouse?"

Retorted the husband: "A man! If I were a mouse, you would be up on that table yelling for help!"

### Time to grow

The train was listed as an "express" but it stopped at every station and even in between.

Towards the end of the journey, the ticket-collector came to examine tickets. "Look here," he told the man, "this boy is too big to travel on a half-fare."

"Really?" said the puzzled passenger. "He was small enough when we started." □



## THE LITTLE CATERPILLAR

B.F., Art by Fabrizio Zubani

Once upon a time, a tiny caterpillar crawled resolutely with all the strength of his tiny feet toward the sun. A grasshopper saw him and, curious as he was, asked: 'Where are you going?'

Without slowing his pace, the caterpillar replied: 'I had a dream the other night: I was on top of that mountain and I could see the whole valley. I liked what I saw and decided to realise it.'

'Are you crazy? How can you think of getting up there? For you, a pebble is already a huge mountain, a sea puddle and a twig an insuperable barrier!' The caterpillar didn't even listen to her; squirming and crawling, he continued marching.

A beetle in shiny black armour saw him: 'Where are you going, caterpillar, in such a hurry?'

Panting with fatigue, the caterpillar replied, 'I have a dream and want to fulfil it. I will climb that mountain to look at our world from there.'

The cockroach burst into a hearty laugh: 'Even I couldn't do that with my long, sturdy legs. Imagine you, you little gouge!' Laughing, he toppled over, legs up, as the caterpillar continued to advance, one inch at a time, with great effort.

Everyone who met him - spiders, moles, frogs, flowers, even a mouse - only repeated the same refrain: 'Forget it. You'll never make it!'

But the caterpillar continued. His strength diminished until he was exhausted, and he stopped to rest. But first, he built himself a shelter to sleep in - a sturdy sleeping bag in which he wrapped himself completely. 'That way, I will be better,' he told himself.

All the animals in the forest gathered to look at the grave of what they considered to be the world's stupidest animal, who had died of exhaustion to fulfil a thought-



less dream.

One morning, with the sun shining in a special way, many gathered around the caterpillar's grave, which had become a monument to senselessness, a warning to fools who throw themselves into impossible undertakings. Suddenly, they realised that the compact shell was tearing, and two antennae emerged. Then, slowly, two beautiful iridescent wings attached to the tiny body of a butterfly soared through the air and spread their wings, showing them in all their splendour.

All the little animals fell silent in confusion. They had been wrong and felt very foolish.

The caterpillar was about to easily realise the dream he had lived for, died for and came back to life: to reach the top of the mountain. □

### THEY ARE GRATEFUL TO OUR LADY AND DON BOSCO

During the regular stock audit in January of this year, the client I was assigned to had some serious issues. Despite multiple visits to Chennai, this problem was not resolved. One of my colleagues in Chennai was under immense pressure to fix it. In May, I began saying 3 Hail Marys to Mother Mary in devotion, asking for help with this issue. After my third visit to Chennai, the problem was finally resolved, and the client agreed to the solution. I thank God and Mother Mary for helping my colleague and me out of this challenging situation, which could have cost us our jobs. *Elvis Pink*

(i) My heartfelt thanks to Our Blessed Mother; after reciting the 3 Hail Marys, I received the following graces: my grandson, who lives in New Zealand passed his Pilot's examination.

(ii) I had a fall and damaged my right kidney. I prayed the 3 Hail Marys once more. The doctors advised that I have it removed to prevent it from becoming cancerous should it remain in the body. After having done a biopsy, it was found to be clear and benign.

*Mrs. Pamela Wells, Australia*

My heartfelt thanks to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and Mary Help of Christians for recovery from a surgery and granting me relief of my other ailments. God be praised and my gratitude to Our Blessed Mother.

*M. Dodd, Pune*

### POPE'S WORLDWIDE PRAYER NETWORK NOVEMBER 2024

*For those who have lost a child*

Let us pray that all parents who mourn the loss of a son or daughter find support in their community, and may receive peace of heart from the Spirit of Consolation.

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### **YOU ARE THE GLORY OF JERUSALEM**

With the word and the burning power of your soul, extol with grateful praise, Mary, the Mother of Christ, the most splendid Dawn, from whom the sun of justice has risen, the invincible reason for the confidence of humanity and the cause of perpetual joy, the miracle of nature and grace, of unspeakable beauty, the crown of the saints, the queen of the world, the pillar of the orthodox faith, the Mother of the Church, the succour and salvation of the people of God.

To stimulate the clear concourse of voices of jubilation, thus exhort the pious gathering of the multitude present: Magnify with me the Holy Mother of the Incarnate Word and Our Lady: *'Tu gloria Jerusalem, tu laetitia Israel, tu honorificentia populi nostri'* (Jdt 15:10). (St Paul VI - 15/04/1967)

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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.

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**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**