

DON BOSCO'S MADONNA

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CONTENTS

From The Editor's Desk
- *Praying Badly*.....3

11 - The Coconut Missile
- *Fr. Erasto Fernandez. SSS*....4

'To Be With People'
- *Fr. Suren*.....7

For Those We Love
- *Stephen Redmond*8

The Departed and Us, Purgatory, etc.
- *St. Martin's Messenger*.....10

Witnesses In And For Our Times:
St. Albert the Great (November 4)
- *Mario Scudu*.....13

Lectio Divina: Hail Mary
- *Roberta Fora*.....17

Quietspaces: Loving Life by
Remembering the Dead
- *Maddalena di Spello*.....18

Family Matters (New Serial Story)
- *Collette Johnson*.....20

Don Bosco's Daily Crosses
- *Natale Cerrato*.....23

NewsBits.....28

Teaching with Don Bosco : *Francis Besucco: Christian Education*.....31

In a Cheerful Mood.....15
Loving Children to their

Loving Mother.....32

The Devotion of
the Three Hail Marys.....33

They Are Grateful to
Our Lady & Don Bosco.....34

Thanks to Dear
St.Dominic Savio.....35



*In times of trial
sustain us
with your presence
O Holy Virgin Mary,
and show us
your tenderness and
your love.*

Cover: **Virgin with Angels**
by
William-Adolphe Bouguereau
1825 - 1905



From The Editor's Desk

Praying Badly

In the month of August I remember writing in this same space about the people who come to pray at our Shrine. (*Standing in the need of prayer!*) But then none of us can call ourselves "experts at prayer" or have the monopoly over praying...and that is what spurred me on to dwell once more on some 'residual' thoughts on prayer that remained.

A few months ago I was reading an article on prayer. What impressed me most was the way it began: *'The first thing I have to admit when asked how I pray, is that I am not good at it.'* I was impressed by the obvious sincerity of a writer who could begin an article like that. But then I began to realize that the same could probably be said of anyone who attempts to pray. We're not good at it. Let's admit it!

I began to think back over my years of preaching and giving retreats. I have listened to people young and old from various backgrounds, speak about 'their' prayer. Not one of them, as far as I can recall, ever felt successful at prayer. Most people will say that they *try* to pray, but, that they don't manage very well. *'I really feel lost when I go to pray,'* is a common enough complaint. *'And I don't seem to be getting any better at it as the years go on,'* people frequently add.

And when I look at my own attempts to pray, I am forced to admit that I too am not very adept at it. Occasionally prayer takes off and I feel good, but for the most part it is a struggle. Sometimes it is a struggle just to settle down: to be quiet and focused. Sometimes my mind simply wanders on its merry way, and refuses to come back to where I want it to be. At other times the Scripture I have chosen firmly refuses to yield up the treasure I know it contains. And occasionally drowsiness takes over, and I wake up to find that my time of prayer is over!

At times like that I find St. Therese of Lisieux a great help. *'It's a terrible thing to admit,'* she writes in her autobiography, *'but saying the Rosary takes it out of me more than any hair-shirt would; I say it so badly! Try as I will to force myself, I can't meditate on the mysteries of the Rosary; I just can't fix my mind on them,'* (Remember that this is a great saint speaking!) She then goes on to say: *'For a long time I was in despair about it. Now I don't distress myself so much; it seems to me that the Queen of Heaven, being my mother, must be aware of my good intentions, and that's enough for her.'*

I think St. Therese in that last sentence has put her finger on what is really important about prayer. It doesn't matter all that much how well we succeed in having fine thoughts and nice feelings. It's not what happens in prayer that is important, but the good intention with which we come to pray. After all, the real work of prayer is much more, God's doing than ours. (cf. Romans 8:26)

Fr. Ian Douulton sdb

11. THE COCONUT MISSILE

Fr. Erasto Fernandez, SSS

In a fit of playfulness, a monkey perched on a tall swaying coconut tree, hurled a coconut at the head of a Sufi passing by. Having miraculously escaped any hurt, the man quietly picked up the coconut, shelled it, drank its refreshing water, enjoyed every bit of its kernel and ended up making a couple of ladles with its shell. What might have been a painful disaster was turned into a positive blessing in disguise by the resourcefulness and inner strength of the Sufi.

Verbal Missiles

There isn't a single person who has not had things hurled at him by others all through life: insults, accusations, criticisms, rejection and the like. But perhaps not many would have acted like the Sufi – taking what is good and valuable in the missile and emerging as a better person, without bothering too much about the offender or his intentions. What a different world would we not have if everyone could follow this teaching, articulated so forcefully by Jesus: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax

collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.'" (Mt. 5:43-48).

Supportive Suppositions

But of course, if a person would want to act in this manner, he would first have to believe that s/he is truly a child of God, someone precious in the eyes of the Father, someone whom the Father will never abandon no matter how faithful or not s/he has been. Once this conviction is firmly entrenched in a person's mind, then it will not be difficult to persevere in doing good even when the other is obviously out to hurt and destroy. However, all this sounds very interesting and fanciful when spoken of in the safe and cozy atmosphere of a Church or prayer house. Most people would be cynical of this attitude in actual practical day-to-day life. The general opinion is that this is good and noble theory but one that doesn't work in practice. Out in the world, one needs to be tough in order to survive.

And yet, it is only the one who has dared to practice this, even in the face of great odds, who will know from experience that what Jesus teaches is the true way to happiness and peace. Most of Jesus' sayings are paradoxical and appear foolish to the rational

mind: think of the 'turn the other cheek' principle. Or again, 'If your enemies are hungry, give them bread to eat; and if they are thirsty, give them water to drink; for you will heap coals of fire on their heads, and the Lord will reward you' (Prov. 25:21-22). What could be more cowardly and disastrous in real life... how could this principle be applied e.g. in the ongoing conflicts between India and Pakistan regarding Kashmir?

It takes a man of super-human courage and moral strength like a Mahatma Gandhi, a Martin Luther King, or a Nelson Mandela to show us that this approach does work – even if slowly and unobtrusively. However, one needs to have the strength of one's convictions and persevere in the approach. It certainly calls for great moral fibre, but isn't this what the Holy Spirit assures us of? 'Do not be afraid, I am with you ... not a hair of your head falls

without your Father knowing it. St. Paul adds not just as theory but as something that he himself lived: "Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law... Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law." (Rom 13:8-10)

Eucharist Paves the Way

Where does Eucharist come into this kind of a picture? Each time we listen to the Word of God, the gist of the reading is always a message of love from our Father. When we train ourselves to pick this up, and relish it till it becomes part of our habitual thinking, it inevitably deepens our conviction of God's personal love of each one of us. As we enter into the Table of the Bread/Eucharist, we are invited to surrender ourselves, our lives, our plans, our successes and failures – in short, everything that concerns us into the hands of this



loving Father. If we can do this consciously and at some depth, it would certainly take the strain out of our inner battles and enable us to practice all that Jesus has taught us... even to the point of being ready to give our very lives for others, be they friend or foe.

It would be worth recalling, when was the last time that we had succeeded in transforming an insult into something precious and valuable? The gain would certainly have been far greater than the intended injury. What is most precious is the peace that reigns within ourselves, a peace that no one can disturb unless we give them permission to do so. This approach does not imply that we live in a fool's paradise. It demands that we look and evaluate whether there is any wrong that we might have done unwittingly or unknowingly. If that is the case, we certainly benefit by acknowledging our faults, taking responsibility for them and working to eliminate what was wrong. The criticism or accusation gives us cause to look deeper into ourselves, to trace our hidden agendas and motivations which others pick up much faster than we normally do. Once we become adept at doing this, we have the key to our own happiness with us always, and no one could then really disturb us.

Again, it helps if we can genuinely give thanks for the insults and injuries we suffer, as these provide us with precious opportunities for conquest of ourselves. We could also pray for those through whom we receive these opportunities, together with



Jesus on the Cross when he said: 'Father forgive them for they do not know what they do.' It takes great inner emotional strength to be able to do this consistently and joyously.

Another requisite which is a great help is the conviction that what others think of us doesn't really matter in the long run. When we become slaves to what others think of us, there is no possibility of ever attaining true peace of mind. For then, we become extremely vulnerable to everybody's passing whims and fancies. And yet, detaching ourselves from the opinion of others is not easy at all. Further, if we have a clear grasp of what the Father thinks of us and of how much he values us, then the inconstant opinion of others wouldn't matter much. And of course, God's estimation of us is more genuine, authentic and accurate when compared to the biased opinion that people generally have.

So, hold your head high and invite one and all to throw as many brick-bats and coconuts at you as they please. The more the better, since you are the one who stands to gain and become richer and more human! □

"TO BE WITH PEOPLE!"

Fr. Suren,

Asst. Parish Priest, Immaculate Conception Church, Borivli, Mumbai



Suren started thinking of the priesthood when he was in college. He was in senior college and had a very good group of friends of all faiths with whom he used to discuss religion, the world, what they wanted to do in life, etc. Sometimes, during those years, the idea of working with and being available to people began to fill his mind. He had been involved with the Church from school days in the choir, singing and reading for daily Mass, and later, during his post-graduate years, as a Eucharist Minister and a Parish councillor. When he was doing his MSc, he thought more deeply of the priesthood as the best way that he could be available for others. Fr. Ubaldo, his parish priest was very supportive and encouraging.

It was, finally, only when he was actually sitting for an interview at Hoechst International to become a Quality Control scientist that he made up his mind. When they accepted him and told him that he would have to sign a three-year bond, he declined, saying that he had decided to join the priesthood ...a decision that even his parents did not know about at that time (they came to know after he had got the admission in the seminary and were really happy for him). Suren never regretted his decision and his priesthood has been full of fun and joy.

This story is based on an interview I gave to children preparing a Vianney Sunday Liturgy. They have written it exceedingly well. We had fun when they asked if I had girlfriends, and I said, "Yes, many." Then they asked if I had been in love and I

said, "Yes, a number of times, and once seriously!" and they all went, "Oooooooo!"

My mind went back to my interviews when I joined the seminary. The first was confusing for the interviewer. When he asked why I wanted to be a priest, I said, "To be with people." He asked again and my answer was the same. I don't think he was satisfied because he asked me to close my eyes, quieten myself and think of Jesus talking to me. When he told me to open my eyes, he asked me again, and I said, "To be with people." That has been the main reason for wanting to become a priest and it is what gives me the greatest happiness. Being with people of all kind, especially children whom I love, is the greatest joy of the priesthood for me.

At the end of my last interview the priest asked if I had ever fallen in love and I said, "Three times." He then asked if I had ever been serious in love and I said, "Once." The interview was over but I asked the interviewer a question: "What would you have said if my answer was 'no'?" and his reply stays with me till today: "I would have told you to go back, fall in love, know what it is, and then decide if you want to be a priest. If you have never fallen in love, how do you know what you are leaving behind?"

I realised the wisdom of that sentence. To be a priest is not to be cut off from the world but to be in the world, to be relevant to people, to feel what youngsters experience and to be able to say, "I was there, I understand." □

If you think God is calling you and you need help write to Fr. Brian: frbrian@rediffmail.com

FOR THOSE WE LOVE

By Stephen Redmond



*They are alive in Him although we say they died.
They live in joy and pain not fully purified.
Until they're free from sin
they cannot enter in
to find in ecstasy their All-Desired.
They are not lost to us but only gone before
like pilgrims, just to land upon a radiant shore.
In Eucharist and prayer
we show them that we care
that they should live in joy for evermore.
So we remember them give thanks for them and pray
for all our brothers and our sisters on their way.
And when they're safely home
they'll pray us who roam
that we may join them in eternal day.*

We call them Holy Souls. They are alive with their share in the life of God gained for them by Christ their Lord. They are deeply in love with God and they know that their loving union with him will never be broken and that heaven is assured to them. And so in Purgatory there is ecstatic joy and unwavering hope. The souls

live in "great expectations".

We call them the *suffering* souls. They lovingly accept the punishment due to their forgiven sins. The chief punishment must surely be the "having to wait" for the vision of God for whom they long with all the concentration of their being. "You have made us for yourself, Lord," said St Augustine,

"and our heart is restless until it rests in you." His prayer certainly fits the souls in Purgatory. They are agonizingly restless for God.

Probably too, they experience release from the guilt of venial sins which they 'carried' unforgiven from their earthly life; and also the excision of the very roots of their sinfulness: depth surgery, as it were, in which the surgeon is the divine Lover purifying the beloved more and more into his own image and likeness.

The Souls in Purgatory

We are united with the holy and suffering souls in that great sharing of love that we call the Communion of Saints. Its head is Christ. Its main activity (so far as the Church on earth is concerned) is the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. The Council of Trent, affirming the existence of Purgatory, declared that the souls in Purgatory are helped by the suffrages of the faithful, especially by the Mass; so that we can say that the Mass is the chief meeting-point between the blessed dead and ourselves so let us cherish it.

We can also help those who have gone before us by asking God to devote the penance-value of what we do or endure to them. We can help by simply interceding for them. We can help by gaining indulgences for them. In all this we show love, renew our own faith and hope and so draw closer to God ourselves. And let us have faith that we are not alone in our concern for the dead. Christ and his Mother and the angels and saints are interceding for them too.

It is only to be expected and

entirely right that we should remember especially those we were close to while they were among us. But it is a blessed thing, to open our hearts to the nameless others - nameless, that is, to us but 'known to God' as we see inscribed on the grave-stones of some soldiers. I remember praying for a while to that saint who when on earth was like me in temperament and conditions of life. Perhaps we could pray specially for our "twin soul" in Purgatory!

"You have made us for yourself, Lord," said St Augustine, "and our heart is restless until it rests in you." His prayer certainly fits the souls in Purgatory. They are agonizingly restless for God.

It is also right that we should cherish our memories of our beloved dead. But our prayers for them necessarily contain a sense of the future - a looking-forward to their entry into glory, ultimately a glory that will involve the body as well as the soul. That is God's absolute promise to them. P is for Purgatory and P is for promise. And please God, who promises, we too will have that glory and in God meet our loved ones again and perhaps discover that they were helping us while we were helping them. □

walking with the Church



The Departed and Us, Purgatory, Life After Death

by St. Martin's Messenger

Q. *What do our departed loved ones know about us?*

A. This is not such a rare question as it might appear to be. Many people wonder whether our departed family and friends are aware of what is happening to us now. Some people would be very happy if that were the case. Others are not so enthusiastic about their lives being under the gaze of departed family members and friends. It smacks too much of the ever present modern camera. There have been many views about this and they all assume that the dead are now in the presence of God. Some few writers suggest that any interest in those left behind would be a distraction from their present happiness, but this is the view only of a minority and is very hard to justify.

Others insist that the blessed know nothing of what is going on in this world for the simple reason that the separated soul is no longer equipped for knowledge of the material world. Without a body it is cut off from that world, though of course it would retain all the previous knowledge and affections it had of particular people before

death. The great saints differed in their view of this issue.

St. Augustine held the above view on the grounds that his own mother never visited him to encourage and console him as she did when she was alive. He was convinced that her new found happiness would not have made her less kind and caring, if it were possible to communicate with him. However, he did not wish to be dogmatic about this matter and suggested that each of us make up our own minds.

St. Gregory was in no doubt that the blessed knew all that goes on in this world, which may be relevant to their happiness. This knowledge he believed came directly through their intimate vision of and unity with God. But he did not think they would intervene in our lives.

St. John Chrysostom also believed that those in heaven were also present to those whom they loved in this life by a new mode of presence, an interior presence. He does not explain the nature of this mutual knowledge but he is describing an experience many people have especially spouses who have achieved a deep level of love.

None of the writers suggest that the souls in heaven are distressed by what they know, or that they desire to intervene in our lives, because they are perfectly attuned to God's will.

One thing is certain: just as we can pray for them even though we do not know their situation so they can intercede for us even though they know nothing about us now. What most people here desire is a strong sense of unity in love with the absent loved one. St. Catherine tells us that our departed loved ones long for our coming to join them just as our heavenly Father does.

Q. Isn't there a story in the book of Macabees indicating the Jewish belief in praying for the dead... Could you please give me an explanation about Purgatory? ... I heard a person saying recently 'you either go up or go down.' What does the Church teach about Purgatory?

A. In the second century before Christ the Jews came to believe that by their prayers they could help those who had gone before them. Judas Maccabeus and his army prayed that the sins of their fellow soldiers might be blotted out. (2 Macc. 12) After the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ Christians acquired the habit of praying for the dead from a very early date. The early Christians did not believe that everyone made it to heaven right away. This happened only to the apostles and martyrs. As one writer puts it 'The early church did not seem to be very clear about where the souls of the faithful were but she definitely knew that prayer and the mass could be of benefit to the faithful departed.' So even though the existence of Purgatory

was only formally declared by Church Councils in the middle ages, there was always a tradition in the church of praying for the dead believing that prayers were helpful to those who had gone before them.

The Catholic Catechism 1030 states 'All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven. The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification.' St. Gregory the Great taught 'As for certain lesser faults, we must believe that, before the final judgment there is a purifying fire... we understand that certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in the age to come.'

We must be purified before we enter God's presence. This is the basis of the Church's teaching on Purgatory. How will God judge a person who has loved God and others, but somewhat selfishly and imperfectly? Should this person die in that state he or she dies with either unrepented venial sin or the effects of sin in his or her life. Now no sin can exist in heaven. In the Book of Revelations we are told that God's presence is pure and holy and 'nothing unclean shall enter it.' So before a person who has died in God's grace and friendship can enter heaven, their sin must be forgiven and the effects of sin in their person purified and removed. Catholics believe that the mercy of God is so great and his desire to save us so strong, that God has this saving provision for those who do not die in the state of grave sin but rather in a state of imperfect love. □

Witnesses in & for Our Times



'ONLY FOR GOD'S GLORY' ST. ALBERT THE GREAT (NOVEMBER 15)

by Mario Scudu (T/A I.D.)

The University of Padua was one of the first universities to be established in Europe. Already in 1200 it was among the so famous that it attracted students, from all over the continent to prepare themselves for their future by studying, reflecting and even having a good time as university students are inclined to do, very creatively and boisterously. They were offered some spiritual formation too, when the second Master General of the order of the Dominicans came to the university. His name was Jordan of Saxony and he was a German. He was not convinced about how effective his preaching would be nevertheless he preached zealously what he had prepared. At the end a good ten students asked to join the Dominican order and among them were two youngsters of noble German descent, one was called Albert of Lauingen.

Albert was an intelligent youngster with a handsome aspect who loved books and was touched by the words of Jordan of Saxony. He was sent to a monastery in Cologne for his



novitiate and then to study theology. In 1228 he became a reader of theology. He began a prestigious career as a professor, teaching in the monasteries of Hildesheim, Freiburg, Ratisbon and Strasburg. In 1243 he was invited to the University of Paris

where, in 1245 he was made a Master of Theology (Magister theologiae). He held the chair of theology there for three years. In 1248 the Dominicans restored the Studium of Cologne (a kind of university) and asked Albert, who was still in Paris, to become its director. He brought with him his pupil, a very brilliant and intelligent young Italian Dominican named Thomas Aquinas. The destiny of these two were to be vigorously woven together and would be of great benefit to the Catholic theology and the entire Church.

A Model for Thomas Aquinas

Albert was open to the truth from wherever it originated and he grasped the opportunity to study (even defective translations) of Aristotle who had influenced the academic world of the time. Albert had great insights but they were only partially realized because he lacked clarity, a systematic and scientific approach. All characteristics that would excel in his illustrious pupil and disciple: Thomas Aquinas, Saint and Doctor of the Church.

Albert, by his example urged people not to be afraid of the human sciences because they were bearers of truth and could help us understand the Faith better. Endowed with a prodigious intelligence and supported by a formidable memory he also studied logic, rhetoric, ethics and various natural sciences including mathematics, astronomy, physics and biology and everything that was available at the time around the Mediterranean basin.

However judging by his critics, he earned just a few pages in the history of philosophy and further, a place in the history of the Church as a bishop and doctor (with the title of 'Universal Doctor') but more important he was a saint.

It is interesting to note that Albert did not spend his life always absorbed in books. He was also involved in the political life of the city of Cologne. In fact, he was committed to personally making peace between the rulers and the archbishop. In 1254 he was appointed the spiritual director of the Dominicans for the vast German province. In that position he demonstrated that he was not only experienced in the study of philosophy and science but was wise and capable in conducting the affairs of state too. In 1256 he went to Rome and then to Anagni with Bonaventure of Bagnoreggio, a Franciscan and close to the papal court. There he successfully defended the right of the members of mendicant orders (like the Dominicans and Franciscans) to take up assignments as teachers in the Universities.

Large shoes and a keen mind

It was in 1257, that the General Chapter in Florence upheld his appointment (as spiritual director) and so Albert joyfully returned to his studies at Cologne. He believed that he could now peacefully devote himself to his studies, but he was mistaken. A short time after he returned he was nominated Bishop of Ratisbon (today Regensburg, in Bavaria). Pope Alexander IV who was aware of his intelligence and wisdom, sent him to the famous and that prestigious diocese, which at that

time was fraught with moral and economic difficulties. Albert accepted, albeit rather unwillingly, the wish of the Pope in Rome and left for his new assignment. When he arrived he was dressed in the humble habit of the Dominicans and on his feet he had a large pair of beautiful boots given to him by loving friends and well suited for long journeys. Things did not pass unnoticed. The nobility of the city, superficial and proud of the glorious traditions of their city, hurled insulting and humiliating comments about the 'new bishop' and his 'big shoes' who had presented himself so humbly (not pompous like his predecessors). So they naturally complained. But they soon realized that besides his 'big shoes' the new bishop also possessed a keen intellect. In fact, he succeeded in bringing peace and harmony to the city too. He put order in the parishes, convents and charitable organizations in the city so that once more they began functioning well. Having completed his mission, he thought he would return to his beloved books and to his studies at Cologne. That was so, but not immediately.

In the following year he went on another trip to Italy and reached Viterbo where the Papal Curia was. On that occasion he met his dear friend and disciple Thomas Aquinas. A year later (1263) he returned to Germany and to Cologne to his beloved studies. But Albert's life was not only books and prayer but also apostolic and social commitments too. During that time he was called upon by various groups to bring peace and harmony in the various German cities that were fighting

among themselves.

In 1274, once again he went on a journey to Lyons to participate in the Council there. This was a trip that brought him much happiness because he would once more have the opportunity of meeting his great disciple and Italian friend Thomas Aquinas. But he waited in vain, because Thomas died in that same year at the Abbey of Fossanova. Albert however, actively participated in the work of the Council with his knowledge and wisdom and the experience of his sanctity. But the knowledge that Thomas had preceded him to the Father's house often brought him to tears.

Nevertheless in 1277, burdened with years, of fame and afflictions he journeyed yet again to Paris to defend the memory of his disciple and friend who was accused by the Bishop of the city, Stephen Tempier of being too favorable to the unbelieving philosophers (heterodoxy). Albert vigorously and admirably defended Thomas, his dear friend.

It is said that a gentleman came to the door of the Dominican Monastery asking if the great teacher Albert lived there and he responded: "No, not any more. He once lived here, but I don't remember when." Was it just humility or was it the disease that today we call Alzheimers? Perhaps a little of both. Albert returned to God on December 15, 1280, leaving his belongings to the poor and all his books to the Dominican Monastery of Cologne. He was beatified by Pope Gregory XV in 1622 and made a Saint and Doctor of the Church in 1931 and declared patron of students of the natural sciences. □

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Waist Deep

While driving through Buffalo after a heavy snow storm, a motorist noted a cop, apparently waist deep in snow, directing traffic. Feeling sorry for him, the motorist called out "I'm sorry you have to work half buried in the snow."

The cop called back "Don't feel sorry for me, feel sorry for my horse!"

Gift Excitement

The small girl had recently received a new watch and some perfume, which she was very excited about. Their family asked the pastor over for dinner. The girl wanted so badly to tell the pastor about her new gifts, but her mother insisted she wait until after dinner and not interrupt at meal time.

Not able to contain her excitement, and not wanting to disobey, the little girl leaned over to the pastor during dinner and whispered, "If you hear a little noise and smell something, it's me!"

Natural Antibiotic

While serving as associate pastor in a church in the California gold country, I had an elderly gentlemen attend some of our Bible studies.

When he missed one week, I called to see if he was alright. He told me he had started to feel sick, but a friend had told him of a natural supplement that had helped him to get better right away. When I asked what it was, he said it was available at health food stores and was like a natural antibiotic.

I again asked what this wonder supplement was called and he said, (meaning Echinacea) "Euthanasia, I think."

Picture Favour

Dining out one evening, I noticed six teenagers boisterously celebrating some event at a nearby table. Toward their end of the meal, one of them got up and produced a camera.

"Hey, wait a minute," one of her companions said. "You have to be in the picture too."

When I approached and asked if I could help, the girl who owned the camera was delighted. I snapped a picture of the group and then, being unfamiliar with the camera, I asked her, "Do you want me to take another in case that one doesn't come out?"

"Oh, no, that's okay," she chirped innocently. "I always get double prints."

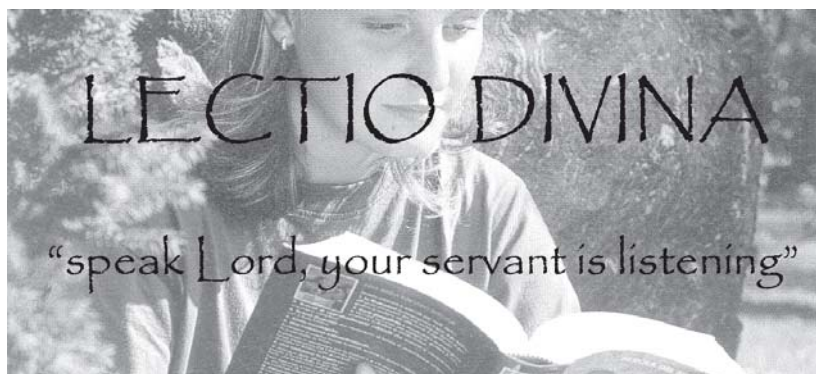
The Cold Truth

On a cold night a man with reputedly poor eyesight was driving a friend home. The frost was thick on the windows, and after a couple of near accidents the friend tactfully suggested that it might help if they cleaned the windscreen.

"What's the use?" the driver replied. "I left my glasses at home."

Putting it Bluntly

An English master, confronted with what to put on a boy's report when he knew the child was cheating but couldn't prove it, finally wrote down: "Forging his way steadily ahead!" □



'HAIL MARY'

by Roberta Fora

Meditating on this most common prayer is like meditating on the Word of God...may it touch our hearts. (ed)

Hail Mary," is the greeting of the Angel Gabriel who was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth. This greeting was addressed to a simple and chaste girl named Mary.

Who knows what disturbing thoughts went through the mind of that very young girl at that moment? She certainly didn't understand the gravity of such a mysterious greeting.

Yet, the plan of God was being gradually fulfilled. Mary pondered in her heart the words that the Lord addressed only to her.

I would like to think that Mary was on her knees in her poor little house absorbed in contemplative prayer trying to attentively listen to the Lord whispering to her heart.

I believe that we Catholics can consider ourselves fortunate because since it is true that we



believe in God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, it is also true that we have in heaven a "special mother" ready to support, help, protect and intercede for us since she is so close to God the Father.

Mary is an exceptional woman, but she is also extraordinarily close to us, perhaps because she is really a 'person' in the truest sense of the term with her doubts, her confusions, her anxieties and her sufferings.

Just think of Mary tired and exhausted with Joseph as they reached Bethlehem because she was about to give birth to the Son of God, or when she was so worried before she found Jesus in the temple of Jerusalem, and yet again, Mary was weighed down with grief, her heart full of sorrow as she stood at the foot of the cross.

If Mary is humanly so close to each of us, could we not find the time amidst the thousand and one preoccupations in our day to turn to her and simply greet her with a

"Hail Mary?"

It is a simple reflection but incredibly profitable for us on our spiritual journey in the interior life.

After all, don't forget that even each of the saints at different times left us an example of their devotion to the Madonna. Don Bosco, for example, among the other things, recommended that we recite three "Hail Marys" at night before we get into bed.

This could possibly be a most worthy and Christian way to conclude our day.

O Lord, help us always to keep the Sweet Virgin Mary as the guide of our lives and following her example of humility may we live simple lives and so reach the endless joy where she awaits us. □



DEDICATED TO THE HOLY
SOULS IN PURGATORY

Quiet

LOVING LIFE BY REMEMBERING

by Maddalena

In this month of November our Christian tradition fervently draws our focus to our deceased sisters and brothers. Visiting cemeteries, maintaining graves, placing flowers on tombs and offering prayers and Masses for the repose of the departed, form part of the devotions that the faithful undertake during this month in a special way. Some fervent Christians in their charity even spare a thought for those whom no one remembers.

November is a time to renew our awareness that death comes to us all as members of the human race. We therefore realize more than ever that we are responsible for one another.

At the heart of our Christian faith is the belief that the dead live in the Lord and therefore, we the living, are united with them through prayer, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and works of Charity. As we pray for those in need of purification we hasten their ability to help us through our earthly sojourn. This mutual charity assures us that we are not alone and our faith in this truth gives courage and new meaning to our lives.

In the final analysis the cult of praying for the dead is actually the cult of life. We honour the deceased and keep their memory alive by affectionately placing bouquets of flowers and caring for the graves that hold their mortal remains but more especially by the good works we perform for the suffrage of their souls.

In the fourteenth work of mercy the Church believes that the living and the dead are united and thus we pray to God for the living and the dead. The deceased are remembered in the Eucharistic prayers at every Mass as being close to the living. The Church seems to tell us that besides loving those who are deceased it is our love for the living, especially for those close to death (the elderly and the terminally sick), or those who live in a fragile state (the handicapped and the sickly) that we express our faith in this doctrine.

As believers, we should rediscover this act of charity as an expression of our love for the deceased that strengthens certain

REMEMBERING THE DEAD

a di Spello

family bonds (God's family), that are weakened by our dissipated materialistic and hedonistic culture.

To begin with, the Christian community ought to renew its faith in a Christian death by preparing the individual Christian to end his/her days with serenity and holy resignation thus preparing the person to meet the Lord.

It is not charity to deceive the sick but it is charity above all to accompany them on their final journey through their illness, making them feel alive and surrounded by love and thus banishing the feeling of loneliness, helping them to cherish their suffering as a means to their final salvation.

In the East, among the oriental religions it is customary after the cremation, the ashes of the deceased are collected, put into an urn and set in a place of honour in a home. Thus the deceased still has a place in every home and the family still cherishes the presence of the deceased. In this manner the deceased becomes visible so as to underline the bond between the living and the dead.

We might not imitate these traditions but we need to recover the sources of our faith and the bond between the living and the dead so that our love and veneration for every human person may be more significantly expressed. □



Family Secrets

Helen Morgan

Dust you are, and unto dust you shall return, but the Lord will raise you up on the last day...May they rest in peace.' A wave of 'Amens' echoed through the small group of mourners gathered round the grave in a bleak English churchyard, one cold, damp January morning.

The young dark-haired priest closed his prayer book and stepped back from the graveside. He removed the stole from around his neck, folded it neatly, and placed it on top of the leather-bound book. He then made his way through the mourners to where Sarah Williams stood ashen-faced, staring into the open grave.

'I have to leave now, Sarah. There's another funeral waiting back at the church. I am so very sorry.'

He shook her gloved hand firmly. 'Are you not coming back

to the house, Father?' she asked abstractly.

'No. I don't have time, but I will remember you in my prayers.' Head bowed, his tall frame moved silently between the mourners as he left the churchyard.

Still in shock, Sarah stood staring into the open grave in disbelief, until she felt a strong arm around her shoulders guiding her away.

'Time to leave now,' Jonathan whispered gently. To slave off the icy wind that whipped round the tombstones, she held both ends of her upturned coat collar with her right hand, while her left reached up to secure her black fur hat from which strands of her fair hair fell.

Tears of sadness welled up in her hazel eyes. After more than a week, she was still unable to weep openly. As her petite figure moved towards the waiting car, she

looked back over her shoulder, and saw that the gravediggers had already begun to fill in the grave. She heard the dull thud of wet clay hitting wood. A shiver ran down her spine.



For an instant her thoughts went back to that day, just over a week ago, when her whole world had been shattered to pieces. It was a Saturday evening. She had prepared a meal for her fiancé, Jonathan, in the family home in Kingsborough, where she lived with her parents, Tom and Bridie, who were on their way to London, where they hoped to spend the weekend.

Her parents were quiet people who kept to themselves. The annual post-Christmas dinner of her father's work colleagues was the only function they ever attended. Her mother was very proud of her husband, who had raised himself up from working as a clerk at Rexel Insurance to becoming manager of its local branch.

They had left around midday for the three-hour journey to London.

'We'll stop for lunch on the way, her father had told her. 'Are you sure you'll be all right on your own, Sarah?' her mother asked her for the third time.

'Of course, Mum. I'll be fine. I'm twenty-six years old and engaged to be married,' she said, laughing. 'And, besides, Jonathan will be here.'

'There's a cooked chicken in the fridge for you and Jonathan, and a cheesecake in the pantry.'

'Mum, will you stop fussing!' she said, exasperated. 'Off you go and enjoy yourself. Dad will go berserk if you don't get a move on soon.'

'Time we were on our way, Bridie,' her Dad said patiently, as he held open the passenger door of the car. 'See you tomorrow night, love.'

She hugged them both.

'Goodbye, Dad. Goodbye, Mum. Have a wonderful time.'

She waved until the dark blue Volvo disappeared out of sight.

'How many on your side of the family, Sarah?' Asked Jonathan, as they sat together after lunch, compiling a list of guests for their forthcoming wedding.

'Only three: Mum, Dad and myself.'

'Any aunts or uncles?'

'No,' she replied. 'Mum and Dad were only children, and their parents died before they met.'

'That's unusual in Irish families,' said Jonathan.

'Yes, I know. I would have loved a brother or a sister, but Mum couldn't have any more children after I was born.'

'Will your mother be able to make the journey, Jon?' she asked, changing the subject.

'Yes. Try keeping her away from her only son's wedding! But my sister can't come. It would be too expensive for her to travel from Australia with her family. Auntie Doris and Uncle George are coming, and Uncle Henry and his family. Shall we say twenty then?' he asked.

'Twenty sounds fine,' she

replied.

'Are you happy, love?' asked Jonathan, as they sat together later watching television.

'Yes, very,' she replied. She felt she was the luckiest girl in the world to be marrying Jonathan. Tall, dark and good-looking, he was a computer programmer at the electronics firm where she worked as a PA to the Managing Director.

'It's hard to believe that this time next year we will be husband and wife,' she said snuggling up to him.

'Yes,' he replied, sighing contentedly. 'It's really hard to believe.'

Just after six o'clock the doorbell rang loudly. 'Are you expecting anyone, love?' enquired Jonathan, surprised.

'No,' replied Sarah, wondering who it could be.

'I'll go,' he said, getting up from the couch. She heard the hall door open and the sound of a deep male voice in the hallway. A few minutes later, Jonathan returned to the living room, his face deathly

pale.

'It's the police, Sarah. They want to talk to you,' he said, his voice shaking. She felt a cold chill run down her spine as a large, red-faced policemen entered the room accompanied by a young Asian woman police constable.

They broke the news to her as gently as they could. There had been a dreadful accident. A lorry had gone out of control on the motorway, crossed the central reservation. It had crashed into her parents' car, killing them both instantly.



Just as she was about to get into the mourning car, Sarah noticed a large, thick-set man in his seventies break away from the small group at the graveside and walk towards her. She had no idea who he was or why he was at her parents' funeral. □

To be continue

PRAYER

God, our loving Father,

*We thank you for the love you have lavished upon us
by letting us be called your children,
for that is what we are.*

*What we are to be in the future,
you have not yet revealed to us,*

but the love we have known in this world

*gives us a glimpse of the wonderfully greater love we will know
when we see you face to face.*

May we treasure this hope until you fulfil it in heaven.

Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen



Don Bosco: The Times, The Man, The Facts

DON BOSCO'S DAILY CROSSES

by Natale Cerrato (T/A:ID)

Don Bosco's sufferings are mentioned under various other titles. There we mentioned some of the great sufferings that filled his life and that he bore with heroic humility and patience. Here, instead, we wish to dwell on his daily crosses, passing though they were, but no less heavy. They pierced him like sharp thorns that he encountered everyday and that pierced him at every step. In reality, the prickly thorns pierced his upright conscience and his sensitive heart. These thorns would have discouraged anyone less patient than himself. What we present here are some examples of his worries, predominantly of a financial nature that he bore because of the faults of others.

Writing to Fr. Michael Rua from Rome on April 25, 1876 he said among other things: *"How many things, how many mistakes! (carrozzini) and all of them coming together. They seem like fables! (Letters 1444)* Here the term (carrozzini) is a Piedmontese term that Don Bosco used to indicate the grave and unexpected injustice of others that he had to bear, not because he was guilty but because he became the victim.

Three Significant Cases

Louis Succi, an attorney and proprietor of a steam-powered



macaroni plant in Turin, was noted for Christian virtue and charity. He asked Don Bosco to guarantee a bank loan of 40,000 lire. Knowing him to be a wealthy man from whom he had received several donations, Don Bosco agreed. Three days later Succi died. The term of the promissory note expired, and Don Bosco informed the heirs..

Cardinal John Cagliero testified: "We were at supper when Father Rua entered and told Don Bosco that Succi's heirs knew nothing of the promissory note, nor did they care to. I was sitting beside Don Bosco who was eating his soup (Note that it was January and the dining room was not heated in any way.) Although he did not seem to be disturbed and did not interrupt his frugal repast, between spoonfuls I saw drops of

perspiration fall into his dish."

There was no way of making the heirs listen to reason, and Don Bosco had to pay the money himself. Only some ten years later did he recover most of the sum he had guaranteed by his signature.

Another charitable act cost him a great deal, if not in actual cash certainly in anxiety. A certain Mr. Joseph Rua of Turin invented a device for a safer and easier exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. It automatically raised and lowered the monstrance and the crucifix from the altar to the little niche above it, eliminating the risk involved in using the customary small stepladder. Don Bosco, wanting to help, sent the design along with a letter of recommendation to the Sacred Congregation of Rites. But the (Sacred) Congregation did not endorse the mechanism, and according to its usual policy did not return the design. Later, however, to spare Don Bosco any serious trouble, an exception was made and the plans were returned. But Sig. Rua blamed Don Bosco, and sued him for substantial damages. Luckily the judge did not agree.

The third distressing incident had its origin also in charity. During the winter of 1872-1873 Don Bosco devised his own system of soliciting alms. That winter was memorable because of a prevalent financial depression. In an attempt to raise money and to keep himself solvent, Don Bosco sent circulars and raffle tickets priced at ten lire each to a very large number of benefactors asking them for a donation.



King Victor Emmanuel II

Circulars and tickets were mailed in sealed envelopes and the prize was a handsome reproduction of Raphael's Madonna of Foligno. The civil authorities chose to interpret this as a violation of the law against public lotteries and took the matter to court. Don Bosco's explanation did not help. During the court proceedings he declared that "there had been no intention of speculating for gain; it was merely an appeal to Christian charity with the promise of a modest prize as a token of gratitude." The court proceedings dragged on and on until 1875. The verdict of the Court of Appeals sentenced the "Rev. John Bosco, priest and chevalier," to a heavy fine for violating the law on public lotteries. Yet, the text of this harsh sentence contains such remarks as "there could be no doubt that the intention of the Rev. John Bosco, priest and chevalier, had been absolutely commendable...and

that the purpose for which the lottery had been organized was most praiseworthy... however, good faith did not exempt him from the penalty since the overt act in itself constituted a violation of the law." The next sentence in the verdict however remains quite inexplicable. "But since he might have possibly gone beyond the purpose intended..." Was sentence passed, then, on a mere possibility?

This implication encouraged Don Bosco to take a further step. He appealed to King Victor Emmanuel II. He implored him to revoke the penalty by royal prerogative, not for his own sake but for the sake of the boys for whom he had to provide, since they alone would have to bear the painful consequences of the verdict.



*The Madonna of Foligno
by Raffaele*

The king graciously consented. The decree setting aside the sentence arrived at a most propitious moment, namely, on the very day that Don Bosco's missionaries were setting out for (South) America. But all that time, how much trepidation! (cf EBM 11, 195-196)

Don Bosco, for love of peace always sought to avoid court litigation though he alone had at times to attend to arrive at a complete resolution. "*Summum ius summa iniuria*," said Cicero that is, excessive rigor in judging is often the greater injustice.

The Saint's Advice

Don Bosco was so alien to matters of litigations that this is what he wrote in his so-called *Spiritual Testament*:

"One has to be very tolerant with outsiders and endure even harm rather than end up with quarrels. Endure all that can honestly be endured in connection with civil or ecclesiastical authorities, but never permit any issue to be brought before a lay court.

Since despite sacrifices and every good intention one must at times face up to disputes and litigations, I advise and recommend that the issue be referred to one or two fully empowered arbitrators, subjecting the matter to their verdict.

Such action will safeguard one's conscience and put an end to matters that, as a rule, would drag on at great length and involve many expenses, while making it also very difficult that peace of mind and Christian charity be maintained." (EBM XVII p. 245) □

NEWSBITS

WEST VIRGINIA, USA

"I'm living proof that prayer works," 23-year-old **Sgt. Louis D. Romano** said to the crowd gathered at Sacred Heart Church in Bluefield after receiving the Purple Heart for injuries he sustained in Afghanistan last year.

Romano could have had the medal presented to him anywhere, yet he chose his parish church - the place where he and his family received an outpouring of prayers and support. The lifelong member of Sacred Heart, who was shot in the face in the right cheek area on Oct 27, 2007, in Afghanistan, was

surrounded by family, friends and fellow parishioners for the ceremony on a recent afternoon at the church.

In his remarks Romano said he appreciated the many prayers and cards and the support he received from the people of the parish, the Bluefield area and beyond.

He also asked for prayers for those still serving in Afghanistan and Iraq. "I've lost friends and there are a lot of friends that aren't here today," he said. "I ask that you continue to pray for our friends that are at war."

Romano was deployed to Afghanistan in January 2007. He also served in Iraq from December 2004 to December 2005.

Romano's mother, Cindy Romano, said, "My son is a hero." He did what he needed to do. We need to pray for our military. Support them and pray for their safety and their families and loved ones left behind." *CNS*

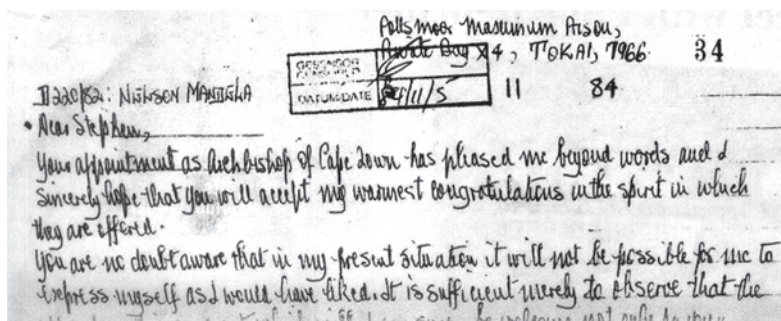


Sgt. Louis D. Romano wears his Purple Heart presented to him in Bluefield Sunday. Eric DiNovo/Bluefield Daily Telegraph

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

South African human rights activist Nelson Mandela was inspired by the Catholic Church's involvement in social justice concerns during his many years of incarceration, he wrote in a letter from prison to the country's first black Catholic archbishop.

Mandela, who eventually was freed and elected president in South Africa's first inclusive poll in 1994, also wrote to Archbishop Stephen Naidoo of Cape Town that he was uplifted by the pastoral care provided by clergy



The letter he wrote from prison to his friend Archbishop Stephen Naidoo praising the role of the Catholic Church in the fight for justice in South Africa.

on Robben Island, where he was imprisoned for 18 years.

The content of Mandela's letter, dated November 1984 was published for the first time in the July 9 issue of The Southern Cross, South Africa's Catholic weekly, to mark Mandela's 90th birthday on July 18.

Archbishop Naidoo, who under apartheid laws was classified as "Indian," and Mandela had become friends before his appointment to Cape Town. Then - Auxiliary Bishop Naidoo regularly made pastoral visits to arid and tightly guarded Robben

Island, where the former president had been incarcerated from 1964 to 1982.

The neatly handwritten and meticulously phrased letter was headed with Mandela's prison number: D220/82. It bears an official stamp and signature indicating that it had been passed by the prison censor. In the letter Mandela noted that "in my present situation it will not be possible far me to express myself as I would have liked," and in closing pointed out that he already had exceeded the permitted length. In a postscript, he added that incoming and outgoing correspondence had a way of disappearing.

Mandela expressed that his friend's 1984 appointment as archbishop of Cape Town "has pleased me beyond words."

"The elevation of black personalities to positions of authority in the church is a development which has far wider significance than many people may realize," he said. "For one thing, it will remove a sensitive



Nelson Mandela on his 90th birthday

problem which has repeatedly rocked South African churches, kept each congregation divided against itself, and generated strong and even violent passions not compatible with the teachings of the Scriptures."

In a response, dated Dec 5, 1984, Archbishop Naidoo said he was encouraged by the positive reaction to his appointment.

"It has helped so many to see the (Catholic) Church not as a foreign import, but as ours, rooted in our lives, in our needs, aspirations, sorrows and hopes," the archbishop wrote. "On the one hand, I am awed by this terrible responsibility, but on the other, I am old enough to know that there is only so much I can do. Need I assure you that I shall do the very best I can, never forgetting my roots in this beloved country of ours."

Mandela also urged Archbishop Naidoo to encourage interreligious dialogue.

Noting that churches have made "many mistakes, some of them very serious," Mandela said, "it is insufficient to say that those errors have been completely dwarfed by the enormous achievements which have been made, and this is the aspect on which builders and positive thinkers will concentrate."

In a later address at a Mass in the Cape Town suburb of Athlone on Sep 12, 1993, Mandela singled out other priests who had visited political prisoners on Robben Island, at the Pollsmoor Prison in a Cape Town suburb, and in Pretoria, emphasizing the morale-boosting properties of contact

with clergy.

In his 1984 letter Mandela also inquired about Archbishop Denis Hurley of Durban, South Africa's prominent Catholic anti-apartheid figure.

"Archbishop Hurley is often in my thoughts, especially now. I would like him to know that," Mandela said.

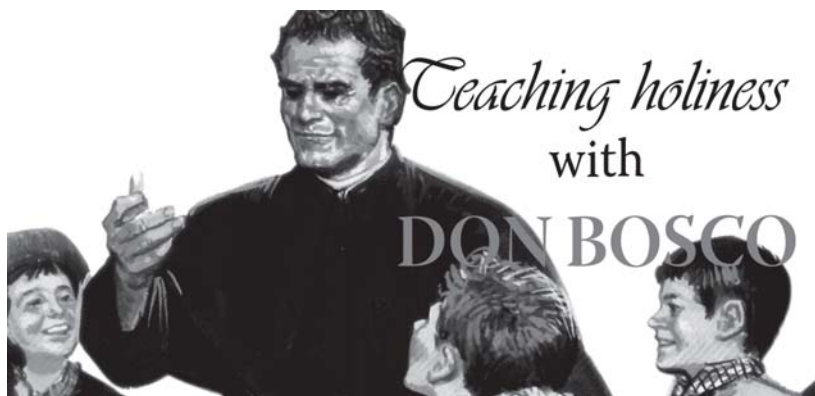
Arranging prison visits was difficult and there are no public records of subsequent meetings between the two men.

Archbishop Naidoo did not live to meet his friend in freedom; he died suddenly at age 51 on July 1, 1989, less than eight months before Mandela's release in February 1990.

After his release, Mandela, a Methodist who reportedly practises his faith discreetly, spoke frequently about the pivotal role of religion in society. At a 1993 Mass in Cape Town during which Mandela controversially received Communion from Archbishop Naidoo's successor, Archbishop Lawrence Henry of Cape Town, he outlined the Catholic Church's mandate.

"The Catholic Church in particular has played a very important role in the fight for justice," Mandela said. "The present Pope (John Paul II) is well known for being upfront in this regard. I made the point to meet him when I was in Rome in 1990 and what he said gave us ... a great deal of strength and hope."

Mandela retired from politics in 1999 after one term in office and was succeeded by President Thabo Mbeki. (CNS)



FRANCIS BESUCCO

Confession and Communion

by Claudio Russo

Remember, that the first way to Reducate well is to help youngsters make good Confessions, and good Communions." Don Bosco recommended this to educators and put it into practice, for instance, in the life of Francis Besucco.

Before coming to the Oratory Francis was already trained to approach both these Sacraments with a certain frequency. At Valdocco it only intensified.

At the beginning of the Novena in preparation for the feast of the Nativity of Mary, Francis went and said to Don Bosco: "I want to make this novena well and among the things I wish to do: I wish to make a general confession." Don Bosco explained to him that there was no need for it. "You can be at peace. There is so much that you have told your parish priest on other occasions." "That is true," replied

Francis, "I did that on the occasion of my First Holy Communion and when there were spiritual retreats in my village, but I want to place my soul in your hands and so I want you to know all that is in my conscience so that knowing me better you can give me better advice on how to save my soul."

Don Bosco accepted. He advised him to choose a stable confessor very carefully, to pray for him and to speak to him if there was anything that was disturbing his conscience. After that, he helped him to make a general Confession.

Francis chose a confessor and did not change him. He approached him confidently and asked him for explanations even outside Confession. He prayed for him and was happy when he was given good advice.

One day Francis received a letter from his village, Argentera. It was from a friend of his who wanted to come to the Oratory. In his reply, Francis advised him to pray to the Lord for the grace, to make the Way of the Cross often and above all to make his Confession every week and receive Holy Communion frequently.

Don Bosco, in the biography he wrote on Besucco, gave his readers this piece of advice: "While I praise Francis a lot for frequently making his Confession, I advise you with all my heart and above all, you my dear boys, to choose a stable confessor. Change him only if it is really necessary. Don't change your confessor each time you go for Confession, or going to one when you commit a grave sin and then returning to your usual confessor. One who does this does not commit a sin but he does not have a trusted guide who knows the depths of your conscience. What happens to

these people is what happens to those who are sick and change their doctors. The doctor would find it difficult to diagnose the illness and therefore cannot prescribe the proper remedy. However, rather than keep silent about certain sins, change your confessor a thousand times if you have to. In the end, remember the great secret of Confession and the strict ecclesiastical secret, Divine and Civil. For no reason can he reveal to others the things he has heard in Confession or what he has said. He cannot even think of what he has heard in Confession. The confessor is not astonished at what he hears and his esteem for the penitent does not decrease. He is like a doctor: when he discovers a serious illness in a patient he offers the appropriate medicine. The confessor is the physician of the soul and as the physician of the soul he heals its torments with



the absolution he imparts in the name of God."

Lucky boys

"How lucky are those boys who frequently approach Holy Communion with the right dispositions," concludes Don Bosco.

Francis was one of those lucky boys: his family and his parish priest trained him to approach this sacrament. At Argentera, Francis went to Holy Communion every week. Then he made it his habit to go on all feast days and sometimes on weekdays too. When he came to the Oratory, Francis received Communion several times a week, during the novenas and later, every day.

Francis' behavior became a model for his companions but at times he did not feel he was worthy to receive Communion. One day he spoke to Don Bosco about this.

"But don't you eat every day in order to give your body strength?" Don Bosco asked him.

"Yes."

"So, then, if you eat every day to give strength to your body that will live in this world for a short time, in the same way you ought to nourish your soul with the spiritual food: Holy Communion."

"But it does not seem right for me to go to Communion every day," said Francis.

"Exactly for this reason, in order to become better, it is necessary for you to approach this sacrament more often. Jesus did not invite just saints to nourish themselves on his body but above all those who were weak, tired and those who detested sin but who, because of their weakness ran the risk of falling into sin again. Jesus told us: 'Come to me all you who labour and are

overburdened, and I will refresh you.'"

"I seem to think that if I approach the sacrament rarely I will approach it with greater devotion."

"Dear Francis, the more you do something the better you become at it. The same thing happens with Holy Communion."

"But those who eat sparingly eat with more appetite," Francis Besucco countered.

"The one who eats rarely and fasts most of the time collapses out of weakness and dies of starvation and the one who overeats runs the risk of indigestion."

"If that is so, in future I will try to receive Communion more frequently because I now understand that Communion is a powerful means to become good."

"Go to Communion as frequently as your confessor allows you," adds Don Bosco.

"My confessor tells me to go to Communion whenever my conscience is in order."

"Good, Francis, follow that suggestion. Remember that Jesus invites you to eat his body every time you are in spiritual need. In the world in which we live, we are always in need. Jesus said: 'If you do not eat my body and drink my blood, you will not have eternal life.'"

One day Don Bosco was talking to the bishop of Liege and the conversation turned to the importance and the efficacy of frequent Communion in the transformation of the Christian life of youngsters and Don Bosco exclaimed: "Therein lies the great secret!" □

LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

My sincere gratitude to Our dearest Mother Mary for a safe and successful operation. Mother protect and keep me under your loving care.

Audrey Braganza, Secunderabad

Dearest Mother, thank you for a clear report after many complications that caused so much tension and distress. All my tests turned out negative.

Marie Lobo, Mumbai

Our sincere thanks to Our Blessed Mother and St. Dominic Savio for helping my son Savio clear his SSC examinations with excellent results. I am eternally grateful.

Ann, Mumbai

Thank you dear Mother Mary for your continued intercession as we moved safely from India to Dubai.

Juliet Ezeani, Dubai

Many, many thanks dear Lord Jesus and Mother Mary for helping me to pass my examinations and for many favours received.

Rohan Aranha, Mumbai

Thank you dear Mother Mary for strengthening my knee, I know it will get better.

Claudino Antao, Bangalore

I thank you dear Mother Mary very much for hearing my prayers and making me a complete man capable of serving mankind.

John, Mumbai

Thank you, Mother, for every passing moment in our lives.

Alex A. D. D'Costa, Panaji, Goa

Thank you loving Mother for your protection at every moment of our lives and for reminding to be true to the Saviour's Word.

Alex A.D. D'Costa, Goa

Dear Heavenly Father and Mother Mary, do accept my belated but sincere gratitude for the sale of our flat and for many many other favours and blessings received over the years.

Stephen Fernandes

My sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians for curing the blood clot in my son's cheek.

Christine D'Souza, Mumbai

My grateful thanks dear Mother Mary for helping my son successfully pass his SSC examination.

Mr. R. R. D'Costa, Mumbai

Many thanks dearest Mother Mary for the gift of a lovely, healthy baby boy and especially for your constant help and intercession all through my pregnancy and delivery.

Sharon & Melvyn Fernandes, Naigaum, Vasai

My sincere thanks to Jesus and Our Blessed Mother for helping my granddaughter to secure a first class in the third year B.Com board examinations and for many other favours received.

A. Miranda, Ahmedabad

I thank Our Blessed Mother and Don Bosco for giving me the ability to study and to clear my MCI examination to become a doctor.

Dr. Pamela Fernandes, Kuwait

Thank you dear Mother Mary for healing me from a stomach pain and for protecting me from sickness.

Filu Noronha, Mumbai

Thank you dear Mother Mary for all the favours received.

Alwyn Gonsalves, Mumbai

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.

Thank you dear Mother Mary for bringing our son back to our family. After I started reciting the 3 Hail Marys for nearly a year things have changed in my life. My son is happily married to a loving girl from a good family. I continue reciting the three Hail Marys and I ask Our Blessed Mother to bless my daughter with a good husband soon.

A Sequeira, Mumbai

Thank you for favours granted through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys.

Devotee, Mumbai

I have received numerous favours through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys. I am sincerely grateful to our dear Mother for all her blessings. Thank you so much dearest Mother for the many favours received.

Antonietta Simoes, Macau (South China)

My sincere thanks for the safe delivery of a baby girl to me and for many other favours received.

Devu Abraham, Tellicherry

Thank you dear Mother Mary for helping me get a permanent job and for a suitable home. We daily pray the 3 Hail Marys.

Rajesh Shinde, Thane

Thank you, dear Mother Mary for all the graces received through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys.

Mrs Jose, Vashi, New Bombay

Thank you dear Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the gift of a baby boy after 6 years. We pray the 3 Hail Marys regularly.

Sarita Mascarenhas, Mumbai

Thank you dear Mother Mary for helping me find a loving wife and for an excellent season. I recite the 3 Hail Marys faithfully.

S. de Souza

My husband developed a serious urinary infection that no one could diagnose and after moving from hospital to hospital they found that he had to be immediately operated. In the process he had a heart attack. I pray the 3 Hail Marys fervently and regularly. There was an emergency surgery performed and they removed an entire kidney. My husband is home and well, thanks to Our Blessed Mother's protection. Keep us, dear mother under your loving protection.

Jennifer Conns, Australia

Thank you, dear Mother Mary, for all the graces received through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys especially for settling my daughter in marriage.

M. D'Silva, Mumbai

Thank you dear Mother Mary for helping my son get a good percentage in his Std X examination and admission into a good college.

Veeda D'Souza, Bangalore

THEY ARE GRATEFUL TO OUR LADY AND DON BOSCO

My grateful and sincere thanks to Mother Mary and Dominic Savio.
My daughter has delivered a baby girl in spite of a difficult pregnancy.

Mrs. C. D'Sa, Mumbai

Thanks to Our Blessed Mother and Don Bosco for a peaceful
Democratic Convention.

Cynthia, Tulsa, USA

Thanks dear Don Bosco for the many favours received.

Domingos D'Souza, Goa

Thank you Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the many
favours received.

Anthony and Avril Murzello, Melbourne Australia

My sincere thanks to Our Blessed Mother, Don Bosco and Dominic
Savio for supporting my daughter Marsha when she had to undergo
a major operation. It was a success and even the baby is safe.

Mrs. Sylvia Bosen, Bangalore

My special thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic
Savio for helping my son succeed in his SSC examinations and for
many other favours. I place at your feet my husband who has hepatitis
B for the last 3 years.

Antonetta Dias, Goa

Thank you dear Lord Jesus, Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco
and Dominic Savio for helping us through our financial crisis and
health problems.

Philo, Mumbai

Our sincere thanks to Our Blessed Mother, Don Bosco and Dominic
Savio for a very big gift received by my son and daughter-in-law in
the gift of a child.

James, Corea, Bangalore

Thank you dear Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for the gift of a
child after nine years of married life.

E.P. Lazar, Thrissur, Kerala

My sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians and Dominic Savio for
helping me in my difficulty and for many other favours. Mother please
bless our home.

Caroline Pinto, Mumbai

My sincere thanks and gratitude to Mary Help of Christians, Don
Bosco and Dominic Savio for helping our son clear all his medicals
and for his visa to join his flying school.

Avril and Wilfred, Mumbai

We are grateful to Our Mother, Mary, Help of Christians, St. Don
Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for all the favours and blessings and
favours showered on our family throughout the new year.

Mrs. Rosalind Moreira, Canada

Thank you dear Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for a safe delivery
and the gift of a baby boy.

Samson and Stacy Vaz, Goa

My sincere thanks to Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio
for granting my son a first class in his Std X exam and for helping
him get admission in a Diploma College and for many other favours
received. Please continue to protect us always.

Mrs. Nancy A. Vaz, Mumbai

Thank you dear Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for protecting
my two sons SAVIO and Cedric from a serious motor cycle accident
in Daman,

Allen Coutinho, London

Thank you, dear Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for
curing my eyesight and restoring my vision.

A Devotee

THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



Our Sincere thanks to dear St. Dominic Savio for all the favours received.

Januarius Gomenes, Goa

Sincere and grateful thanks to Our Lady, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for my daughter's happy settlement and for blessing her with a baby boy.

Mrs. Neves Fernandes, Goa

My belated, but sincere thanks to Our Lady Help of Christians and St. Dominic Savio for the safe deliveries of my daughters-in-law though they were complicated cases.

Mrs. Philomena Dias, Mumbai

My sincere and heartfelt thanks to dearest Mary help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the safe delivery and the gift of a beautiful baby girl and also for giving my sister-in-law a good job abroad.

Mrs. Marina Godinho, Mumbai

Sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians and Dominic Savio for all the favours received.

Ancy Joji, Thane (W)

Thank you Jesus and Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for healing my daughter of her breast cancer through the recitation of the 3 Hail Marys.

Virginia, Sydney, Australia

My grateful thanks to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Our Lady and Dominic Savio for the miraculous cure of my tongue from an incurable disease and for many other favours received.

Mrs Natalia D'Souza, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to My Heavenly Father, Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for helping my son who has always failed to pass his Std. X CBSE board examinations. At one stage the principal did not want to send him for the examinations.

Shirley Antao

Our grateful thanks to the Holy Spirit, Mary Help of Christians and St. Dominic Savio for the many favours received especially for the 1st Class obtained in the SSC examination and for securing admission in a good college.

Donna Coelho, Mumbai

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

NOVEMBER 2008

Holy Father's General Intention: *That the testimony of love offered by the Saints may fortify Christians in their devotion to God and neighbour, imitating Christ who came to serve and not to be served.*

Missionary Intention: *That the Christian communities of Asia, contemplating the Face of Christ, may know how to find the most suitable ways to announce him, in full faithfulness to the Gospel, to the peoples of that vast Continent so rich in culture and ancient forms of spirituality.*

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MARY WAS THERE

I am suffering from pancreatic cancer and since the chemotherapy wasn't helping I was asked to discontinue the medication. In a newspaper article I read about a faith healer in Manipur. En route to Manipur we met a Manipuri girl named "Sweetie" who, overhearing our conversation volunteered to help out and immediately started making calls. That's when I knew Mother Mary was with me. On reaching Imphal she took us to her home and arranged for transport to Churachandpur District where the healer resided. By the time we reached our destination the centre had already closed for the day. The volunteers refused to let us in. After praying to Our Lady my family requested them again. They let us in and the healer himself, being a Roman Catholic, was happy to greet us. He prayed over me and gave me the medicine. In a land infested with militants speaking an unknown language and among an unknown people I realized Mary was there. It was the 27th June, the feast of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour. *Reginald Vaz 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.

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