

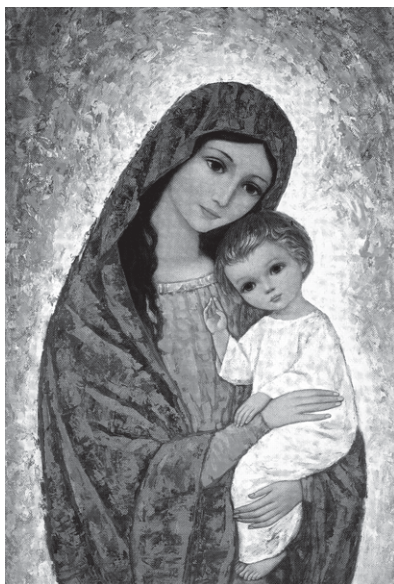
DON BOSCO'S MADONNA

MUMBAI

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CONTENTS

From The Editor's Desk - <i>Apologetic Catholics?</i>	3
10 - The Eagle and the Chickens - <i>Fr. Erasto Fernandez. SSS</i>	4
Following the Still Small Voice - <i>Fr. Lester Vaz</i>	7
A Window on the Scriptures - <i>Helen Gallivan</i>	8
God's Promises, Truth, St. Jude, etc., - <i>St. Martin's Messenger</i>	10
Witnesses In And For Our Times: <i>St. Daniel Comboni (October 10)</i> - <i>Mario Scudu</i>	13
Lectio Divina: Our Father - But Deliver us From Evil - <i>Roberta Fora</i>	17
Quietspaces: The Eucharist and the Mission of the Church - <i>Antoine Tetta</i>	18
A Conflict of Interest (Final Episode) - <i>Collette Johnson</i>	20
Don Bosco and the Missions - <i>Natale Cerrato</i>	23
NewsBits.....	28
Francis Besucco: The Importance of Christian Education.....	29
<i>In a Cheerful Mood</i>	15
<i>Loving Children to their Loving Mother</i>	32
<i>The Devotion of the Three Hail Marys</i>	33
<i>They Are Grateful to Our Lady & Don Bosco</i>	34
<i>Thanks to Dear St.Dominic Savio</i>	35



*In every age
Christians have
instinctively
invoked Mary
using titles like
Holy Virgin,
Virgin Mother,
Immaculate Mother!*

Cover: **The Madonna
of the Rosary**



From The Editor's Desk

Apologetic Catholics?

With newer and better paying jobs sprouting up for youngsters just stepping out of college with stars in their eyes - they seem to be in control of everything they lay their hands on. First it is the cell phone then a two-wheeler and then the trendy wardrobe and all its accoutrements. The sad fact that surfaces is that all these gimmicks and gizmos leave little or no place for a 'refreshed' Faith.

It is commonly accepted that once youngsters have been Confirmed (with a capital 'C') they have finished Catechism classes for the rest of their lives. They seem to be answerable to no one for how they practice their Faith. Each year society receives a generous helping of such youngsters who will probably see the inside of a church or a presbytery only on the threshold of their wedding. That's a pretty long wait to keep one's Faith in incubation!

As new wonders of progress are announced they quickly become daily realities for us, giving us greater confidence in ourselves. They also heighten our expectations about what a normal standard of living should be. These developments are welcome indeed. But our excitement about them can make us complacent and forgetful about our limitations. We imagine that we are self-confident and self-sufficient. Our minds, that have turned secular, now think that there is no need for religion or prayer, for Church or sacraments - that God belonged to the superstitions of those teenage years.

In such a secular society we can feel inhibited, even intimidated. We may turn into "apologetic Catholics." We become afraid to make any religious contribution to conversations or public discussions even within Catholic circles while making excuses for our convictions.

The worldly doctrines of health and salvation, of universal happiness and progress are not always verified on our planet today as so many new-age gurus disappoint so many gullible people depriving them of the very sanity they craved to achieve leaving them confused and depressed with any sure foundation.

Cracks betray the fragility of the secular house of our Faith; elementary questions about life are suppressed, the riddle of death is unanswered, the full truth about oneself and others is side-stepped and many opportunities to fashion one's happiness exclusively by oneself leads to boredom and despair.

Christ was sent into the world to enlighten those who sit in darkness and to direct our feet in the way of peace. Why should we (who are elders) be so diffident about offering His wisdom to those who know many things but not things that bring them peace?

The Psalmist was obviously inspired when he told us that "unless the Lord build the house they labour in vain who build it." Certainly there is no call for us to apologize for his building plans or to be embarrassed by his Name!

Fr. Ian Douulton sdb

10. THE EAGLE AND THE CHICKENS

Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss

By chance a farmer one day found an eagle's egg and placed it under a brooding hen for hatching. Not many weeks later an eaglet was seen proudly strutting among the little chickens: it grew with them and lived like them in every way. It clucked and cackled, scratched for worms and roamed the yard with the other chickens. It even managed to flap its heavy wings and fly a few feet into the air, much to the consternation of all his 'brethren'.

Years passed with the eagle continuing to live like a chicken till one day a royal eagle happened to pass overhead. The domesticated one gazed at the huge majestic bird as he soared effortlessly in the sky - and it wondered who that was. The giant bird glided gracefully not one bit deterred by the powerful wind. Spellbound, the eagle who lived like a chicken watched it for hours till suddenly, it heard a voice say deep within itself: 'You are an eagle too and are meant to fly like that! You are not a chicken destined to scratch the earth for a measly morsel the whole day long.' The eagle pondered these words and as they echoed in his heart - the confused eagle felt something stir within his inmost being. He deeply sensed its true nature and secretly longed to fly like a real eagle. He even made a few timid attempts when no one was looking. But, he was mortally frightened at the prospect of getting off the ground: how would he face those raging winds and the

vast expanse of the deep blue sky?

Chickened Out

So he sat back to reflect and finally came to a momentous decision: he was born among chickens and among chickens he would stay till he died. So the eagle continued living among chickens and behaved like any one of them for that is what he believed he really was, no matter what his inner nature told him.

To its consternation, however, not long after that fateful day the farmer's son picked him up in his hands and said almost the very words he had heard in its heart: 'You are an eagle - you are meant to fly.' Saying this, he hurled the bird up in the air, but trembling with fear, he soon returned to the safety of the coop. The following day and for many days thereafter, the boy would keep reminding the bird that he was meant for greater things - but each time, after a feeble attempt, he would return to the calm and quiet of the farmyard. Finally one day the boy took the eagle up a high mountain



and with a mighty heave hurled him high up in the air shouting: 'Go, eagle go - conquer the sky and rule it as the king of birds!' Fired by some strange emotion, the eagle flapped its mighty wings enthusiastically and lo and behold it was able to fly like a real eagle. The rushing winds only increased his zest for flying and he never ever came back to the chicken yard again.

The Giant Within

This is a great discovery and achievement this but the dynamics involved here can take on colossal proportions when a human being who is truly a child of God decides to live and die like a mere exiled mortal. There is no doubting that the majority of people, Catholics included, have taken exactly this same painful decision. They might think that they are beloved children of God because they have heard others say this, they might even profess it openly before others to sound learned and modern, but deep in their hearts, they firmly believe that they are no better than 'poor banished children of Eve, sending up sighs, weeping and mourning in this valley of tears.' It is interesting to note that only recently (April 2007) when the International Theological Commission met to review the doctrine of Limbo, the group finally came up with a statement to this effect: 'that although the teaching of Limbo has been part of the official Church teaching, yet they were convinced that God in his goodness would not permit newborn unbaptized children to be eternally separated from him!' This statement itself is a very progressive step and must have cost these

theologians many a qualm of conscience. Great courage would they have needed to go against several centuries of Church teaching, which in truth does not seem to appear anywhere in the Gospels, nor resonate with the mind of Jesus and his teaching. But the ultimate question still remains: How many, in practice, would really believe this statement and make the needed effort to remodel their lives accordingly?

Costly, Yet Rewarding

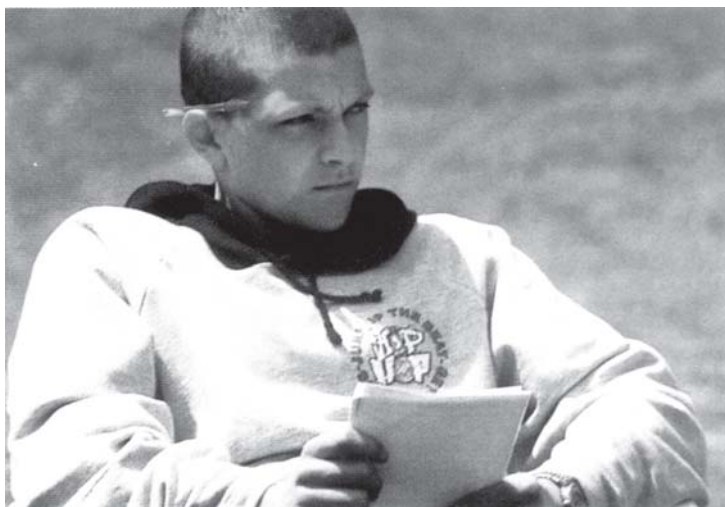
Change is always difficult and costly. But when it is a question of changing from a phony self to one's true self, no matter what the cost, it must be achieved. God in his great love for us sent us his own Son Jesus, to show us who we really are. All we need to do is to accept our son-ship in Christ and allow the Holy Spirit to enable us to live as Jesus did. Is it any wonder that towards the end of his life Jesus summed up everything for us in just one command: 'Love one another *as I have loved you.*' It is only in loving and living as Jesus did that we would be able to realize our true nature as children of God.

Today even the behavioural and other sciences tell us that a human being's true nature is to love, to live in harmony with others, to collaborate, to be compassionate to the weak. These other-like qualities come naturally to most persons. When people do not act in this way, it is because they have somehow, somewhere been deeply hurt; their true nature has been warped. And when a person acts out of his warped nature, he cannot but go about hurting others too. Yet, herein lies the challenge for a true Christian: having accepted healing

and wholeness from the Father through Jesus, he can truly undertake the mission of healing others. For this, he does not even have to say that he wishes to heal others; his very behaviour, for example, will be soothing and calming in times of distress. Daniel Goleman tells of how during the recent Iraq War, a group of armed US soldiers approached a mosque to ask the religious leader for help in organizing the distribution of relief supplies. To their surprise, they were met by an advancing mob of Muslims shouting and gesticulating wildly, since they interpreted the advance of the armed troops as an attack. Realizing the dangerous level of hostility in this situation, the Commander immediately ordered his troops to get down on one knee with their guns pointing to the ground. Giving the lead himself, he commanded all his men to smile. Seeing this sudden unbelievable change, the angry mob kept

advancing but now many were smiling in return. They were ultimately able to achieve their peace mission with exemplary amicable co-operation.

This was no doubt a dramatic situation, but each day presents us with innumerable occasions when each of us can act as a child of God without needing to flaunt our own strengths or qualities. And that Christ-like behaviour would have a tremendous influence on those around us. What a different world would we not have if we all believed that we are no longer children of Eve weeping and mourning in the valley of tears, but true children of a loving Father sent into our surroundings on a mission of love. Rather than be chicken-hearted when faced with evil situations or people, we can conquer and transform the world, because Jesus our risen Saviour has overcome all evil. 'Do not be afraid,' he assures us, 'I am with you always, even till the end of the world.' □



Release the true eagle in you and soar to new heights of love!

"FOLLOWING THE STILL SMALL VOICE"

Fr. Lester Vaz

Diocesan Catechetical Centre, Bandra, Archdiocese of Mumbai



Often, God calling a young person to the priesthood or religious life is thought of as very spectacular and dramatic like the powerful experiences of Moses before the burning bush or Paul zapped by God on his way to Damascus but sometimes He leaves the listener still doubting but He doggedly keeps calling him to take that leap in faith.

My vocation story is not really unusual. Sunday Mass, sometimes on weekdays too, often literally pushed by my mother, singing in the choir, reading at Mass, etc. The exemplary lives of a few Jesuits had a deep impact on me too. I can never forget Fr. Conti who was never irritated with me darting in and out of his room, most of the time uninvited. I sat with him for hours just talking to him. Already then I was amazed that he had left his home in Spain when he was very young and hardly went back. Did I want to be a priest then? I don't know!

Time moved on...it was the crazy life that comes after school and before college when a vocation (if any) takes a back seat. There were so many, many things to do and God was certainly not my top priority. College was uneventful yet enjoyable. At the young age of 21, I started working in Bank of Baroda. In the year 1988, I had a powerful experience of the Charismatic Retreat conducted by Fr. James D'Souza in Khandala where I developed a thirst for God's Word and a deeper love for the Church. It was then that I started contemplating the priesthood occasionally but the call was pushed aside for personal and material reasons.



When I joined the Ministry of the Word in the Goregaon Seminary I once again strongly felt that I was being called to the priesthood. I was scared as it would upset my comfortable life - yet the call to the priestly life seemed so exciting.

Finally, after working for 10 years in the Bank of Baroda, I finally took the plunge. Then at the seminary I spent some of the most beautiful days of my life. Here, with the help of the professors and brothers (now priests), I broadened my perception of life. Today after six years as a priest I realize it has had its ups and downs, its moments of joy and boredom but most of all there was an underlying peace through the experiences at my two parishes, St. Anthony's Vakola, and Our Lady of Victories, Mahim which added to my joys of being a priest. "I firmly believe that *He who has begun a good work in me will see it to completion*" (cf Phil 1:6). □

A WINDOW ON THE SCRIPTURES

by Helen Gallivan

We're ready for the Rosary." How often did my heart sink as a child, when I heard that summons. Another fifteen minutes of tedium to be endured! As time passed, the Rosary became a mere childhood memory, and ceased to be a part of my everyday prayer.

The Unfolding of Richness

Many years later, for a special intention, I decided to recite the Rosary daily for two months. I have to confess that I did this more as a form of self-denial than out of any great expectation of spiritual enrichment. Surely, I thought, reading the Scriptures would constitute a heartier spiritual diet than this!

Then, as the days and weeks passed, I came to see the Rosary as another window on the Scriptures. Working my way over and over again through the cycle of joyful, luminous, sorrowful and glorious mysteries, I gradually became an onlooker at each event. I reached beyond the concise Scriptural descriptions, and became a part of each scene: watching, listening, reacting. And, as I did so, the wonderful richness of each mystery started to unfold itself, layer after layer.

A Momentous Visit

Take, for example, the Visitation, a fairly straightforward event, you may

think. St Luke (1:39-56) briefly describes how our Lady hurried away to be with Elizabeth when her time should come. Their brief interchange gave us part of the *Hail Mary* and the glorious *Magnificat*.

But now, *visualize* the scene. See Mary arriving after her precipitate journey at Elizabeth's house, with the angel's word still ringing in her ears, 'You shall conceive a son... the Holy Spirit will come upon you'. Mary, with blinding faith and total obedience, has believed and accepted the



'Gradually the long repetitive prayer which is the Rosary leads us into our very hearts where the Spirit of God dwells.'

unbelievable: 'Let it happen to me as you have said'.

The angel has followed this message with the scarcely less strange news that Elizabeth, long past her menopause, is six months with child. No wonder Mary 'set out at that time and went as quickly as she could into the hill country... into Zechariah's house'.

Now follow Mary as she enters the house, and witness one of those dramatic and moving scenes that punctuate the Rosary. Mary, her word of greeting dying on her lips, watches her elderly and heavily pregnant cousin rise slowly to welcome her. In that instant she knows, without any shadow of doubt, that 'nothing is impossible to God'.

Mary's own wonderful vocation so moves Elizabeth that she exclaims, 'Blessed is the fruit of your womb... and blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled'. And, in reply, Mary bursts forth into the exultant song of praise we now know as the *Magnificat*. Prophetic as well as exultant - 'From now onwards all generations will call me blessed' - this glorious prayer is an extraordinary proclamation by a young girl from the backwoods of Galilee. We, kneeling at prayer twenty centuries later, bear testimony to her prophecy.

Intimate Contact With Faith

And so we follow Mary, not just through the doorway of Elizabeth's house, but through all the events of the mysteries. We bring each scene to life as we see, hear, touch and - above all - react,



Mary believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled and she responds with the exultant song of praise, the Magnificat.

with wonderment, joy, anguish, humility and adoration. We create and re-create the scenes, as they unfold before us again and again. We come closer to the realities of our faith as we grow in intimate contact with them.

And gradually, to our amazement, the long repetitive prayer which is the Rosary leads us into our very hearts, where the Spirit of God dwells. There, because 'we do not know how to pray properly, the Spirit personally makes our petitions for us in groans that cannot be put into words' (Rom 8:26). We are no longer just reciting the Rosary; we are praying the Rosary, deep in the mystery of God's love. □

walking with the Church



God's Promises, Truth, St. Jude, The Mysteries of Light, St. John

by St. Martin's Messenger

Q. I feel sad and angry at God and all His promises. God is the just Judge but where is the justice? All my prayers and novenas were not answered.

A. There is no simple answer to why God does not grant what we ask for in faith and with the utmost of confidence. A partial answer is that we do not know the future. If we did, would we understand that what we had asked for would not have been for our good? Of course, we often cannot possibly understand that what we had requested could not have been good for us or for the one for whom we prayed.

Another partial answer is that our prayers were certainly heard by God and He gave us graces that He knew would be helpful. Later on in the next life, we will realize that God acted as a good parent who knows that certain requests from a child should not be granted.

Another partial answer could be that perseverance in prayer, no matter the outcome, is good for us and is a test of our faith. If one quits trusting in God when a

prayer request is not answered in the way that one wants, then that is certainly a failure in trust of God.

Hopefully, the sum of these partial answers can restore your confidence and trust in God that He is reliable and loving and caring and just, no matter how you are tempted to react. And "tempted" is another partial answer because God's enemy and your enemy will never give up his relentless attack on your trust in God.

Q. "What is truth?"

A. Pilate's question put to Jesus, whether rhetorical or not, is just as relevant today as when first spoken. Probably it is more relevant today when one is likely to be despised as an ignorant dogmatist for holding some truths as irrefutable. The reason for such rejection is a commonly held conviction (if we dare to use the term) that all intellectual positions are to be held only as tentative and subject to revision in the light of further reflection.

This spirit of tolerance of any ideas is reinforced in a democratic

society where majority vote is the norm for what is to be accepted or done. In other words, every position is open until decided by majority. And what is decided now can be changed later if the majority wants to reverse that position.

It was with this kind of faulty thinking in mind that the General Councils of the Church from the very beginning wanted to address these errant positions, beginning with the Council of Nicaea where the fundamental truth accepted was that Jesus is both God and man at the same time. The heretic Arians who denied the divinity of Christ were wrong in 325 A.D. Any present-day "Arians" are wrong for the same reason because what the Council of Nicaea decreed holds true for all time. For the same reason the Church held that Mary is the Mother of God as decreed by the Council of Ephesus; Purgatory exists as decreed by the Council of Trent.

Some truths have been settled forever. They are not open to reversal by future generations. These are infallible truths. The sooner we live by this conviction, the healthier we will be as members of the Church.

Q. Tell me something about St. Jude. How did he become the patron of hopeless cases?

A. St. Jude is one of the Apostles. He is believed to have been put to death when he was preaching the gospel in Persia. The proposed reason for his patronage of hopeless cases is that since his name was so like Judas Iscariot no one wanted to pray to him and only turned to Jude after all other saints failed.

Q. Why was it necessary to introduce the 'Mysteries of Light' into the Rosary? Surely we had enough to meditate on without adding any more mysteries?

A. The answer to your question can be found in the following quotation: "The fifteen-decade Rosary has a serious lack. The Joyful Mysteries reach only the story of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple. The Sorrowful Mysteries begin with Gethsemane. Not a trace of Jesus in the Ministry! And the fact is: it is not possible truly to understand the death of Jesus except in the context of his life. Jesus did not die - Jesus was killed. He was put to death precisely because of the witness he had borne, in all that he was and in all that he had said and done, throughout his ministry. 'Who do you say I am?' The answer is not in his death alone but in what led to his death. The proposed addition by Pope John Paul II of Mysteries of Light make the Rosary a more balanced prayer!"

Q. Who was St. John who stood at the foot of the cross with Our Lady and had been entrusted with the care of Mary by Christ himself? When is his feast day?

A. At the foot of the Cross was John the Apostle. He is the one who wrote the fourth gospel and as such is known also as John the Evangelist. he was the only apostle at the Crucifixion where Jesus placed Mary in his care. (Jn 19: 25). His feast day is on December 27. He and Peter were the first apostles at the tomb of the risen Christ. □

Witnesses in & for Our Times



'TO DIE FOR CHRIST AND FOR AFRICA' ST. DANIEL COMBONI (OCTOBER 10)

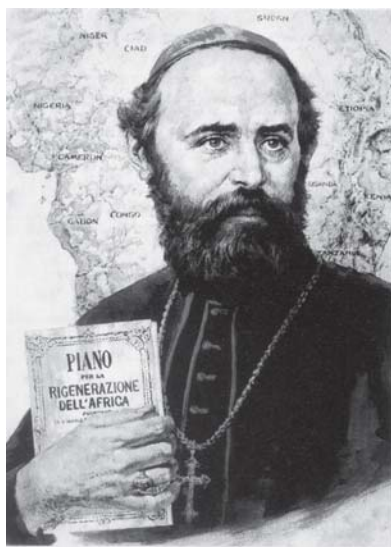
by Mario Scudu (T/A I.D.)

For many years the Church has dedicated this month of October to the missions and it is a good time to remember St. Daniel Comboni a great missionary who spent his entire life amidst numerous difficulties for the spiritual and social development of the people of Africa.

Till His Last Breath for Africa

Daniel Comboni was born to Limone-sul-Garda on March 15th 1831 to deeply Christian parents. After he attended the seminary at Verona he entered the institute of Don Nicola Mazza. Don Mazza accepted good youngsters who came from poor families. In those years a strong missionary wind was blowing through the Church and new missionary organizations were springing up everywhere. Even in that institute there was a special interest in Africa, so much so that Don Mazza was jokingly called Don Congo. Daniel was intoxicated with these thoughts too.

1849 was an important year in his life. After the failure of two missionary expeditions from the institute, Daniel who was only 18



pledged before his superior that he would devote his entire life to the mission of Central Africa. Almost 20 years later, in 1867 he would write: **"I have pledged myself for Africa for the past seventeen years, and I will live for Africa and not for myself."** He would keep this pledge up to the end of his life.

He was ordained a priest in 1854

but before leaving for Africa (1857) he prepared himself for three years by studying Arabic and nursing. A cholera epidemic ravaged the village of Buttapietra (Verona) and Daniel gave himself zealously and selflessly as a priest and a nurse impressing the authorities who acknowledged his dedication. Through all this he put into practice what he had learned and it would subsequently be very useful to him.

In 1857 he left for Africa with a group from the institute of Don Mazza. They were five priests, a lay volunteer and a blacksmith. Daniel was the youngest. He not only lived this first experience through the eyes of an ardent missionary but also through the eyes of an avid explorer who knew how to admire the pristine beauty of nature that he saw all around him and he praised the Creator for it. But two priests died and the layman was struck with fever. Daniel returned to Italy but his spirit still yearned to go back to Africa, the place to which he had consecrated himself.

1864 was a decisive year for his missionary activity.

His plan for the regeneration of Africa

15th September 1864: Daniel prayed for a long time at the tomb of St. Peter. It was during this time that Sr. Margaret Mary Alacoque, the apostle of devotion to the Sacred Heart was beatified. He was not aware of what exactly happened to him. Was it just human intuition? Was it a bright and beautiful thunderbolt? Was it an inspiration of the Holy Spirit? Perhaps it was all of these. In the following hours Daniel Comboni wrote some 24 pages of

a draft that would constitute an outline of how his missionary apostolate would proceed in the future. The title was: "Summary of a new design for the Society of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary for the Conversion of Africa proposed to the Sacred Congregation of the *Propaganda Fide* by Daniel Comboni of the institute of Mazza." Subsequently he would add: **"Entrusting myself to that Most Sacred Heart that beats for the people of Africa and who alone can convert souls, I am prepared to suffer and offer everything up to my last breath for Jesus Christ and for the health of the unfortunate people of Central Africa."**

The Summary (called 'the Plan') contained his global programme that intelligently joined Evangelization and human promotion and it is still spoken of and used today (when speaking of the missions) to save the Africans through the Africans.

This "Combonian Missionary Plan" was not only original but also a revolutionary one. It suggested to all not only a revision of the methodology of evangelization right up to its implementation but it also asked for a revision of a missionary theology as well.

At one time everything was in the hands of European missionaries. Comboni suggested that the responsibility be entrusted to the people of the place. This was not very easy because much was constitutionally held by the Europeans and they were incapable of surrendering it.

Another characteristic element of his missionary action was the empowerment of women. This was an absolute novelty. In empowering women Comboni not only found

them valuable in evangelizing the population but also a great help in carrying out the transformation of the entire social and economic structure of the villages in which they operated.

In 1864, on his way back from Paris he was a guest of Don Bosco at Turin, Valdocco for a few days. That city also was alive with much missionary propaganda. This was a movement that was not extraneous to the Saint of the Young. The two certainly spoke about the new plan and methodology for the missions. Don Bosco treasured his conversation with Comboni and kept it in mind when he began sending his first Salesians to the mission in Patagonia, Argentina. In 1880 the sons of Comboni returned to Valdocco as guests of Don Bosco on the occasion of the great feast of Mary Help of Christians. The Bishop who celebrated the solemn Mass at the Basilica was also fired with this missionary zeal.

To save Africa through Africans

His plan was convincing and even innovative. In fact Pius IX encouraged him. The Mazza Institute was of another opinion. They disallowed the entire project but Comboni was not discouraged, he proceeded alone. In fact, in 1867, he founded the male institute for the missions of Africa (The Comboni Missionaries), and in 1872 the Pious Mothers of Africa who would be the female branch of his congregation. Now he had a family, sons and daughters, missionaries who would continue (and even to this day) their missionary work for the good of Africa.

Comboni alternated his real missionary work in Central Africa with trips to Europe in search of funds. Wherever he went he was welcomed and funded generously.

Finally in 1872 Pius IX named him Pro-Vicar Apostolic for Central Africa and given authority over all the missionaries who operated there. Then in 1877 he was nominated bishop (of Khartoum). His work penetrated right into the heart of Africa, the equatorial region and the region of the Great Lakes amidst many difficulties. He fought with all his might against the slave trade and its official abolition but he needed the guarantee and support of the European nations too.

In his last years he was tormented by sickness (violent fevers) but also by much calumny that was all unfounded. He bore it all with a lot of patience and great forgiveness.

A few months before his death he received news of a rebellion that started in Sudan through the work of a self-styled prophet Mohamed Ahmed Mahdi who had affirmed that he was sent by God to liberate Sudan from the Turks and from the Christian influence. All Comboni's work was destroyed, the Christians were threatened, chased out or killed. Some European missionaries were even imprisoned for up to seventeen years. Innumerable cruelty and ferocious atrocities were committed, all in the name of Allah!

His intense earthly life came to an end on 10th October of 1881 with his last thoughts being of Africa.

The Church recognized the work of this great missionary and canonized him on October 5th 2003. □

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

"Collect Call"

My mother was away all weekend at a business conference.

During a break, she decided to call home 'collect'. My six-year-old brother picked up the phone and heard a stranger's voice say, "We have a Betty on the line. Will you accept the charges?"

Frantic, he dropped the receiver and came charging outside screaming, "Dad! They've got Mom! And they want money!"

What Don't You Have?

An elderly man went to the doctor for a visit. "Doc," he says, "I am so stricken. I have chest pains, headaches, back pains, nausea, arthritis, constipation, stomach cramps, earaches, burning in the eyes, congested lungs..."

"Sir," says the doctor, "you complain you have so many things. What don't you have?"

The man answers, "Teeth."

Lobster Pets

After a day fishing in the ocean a fisherman is walking from the pier carrying two lobsters in a bucket. He is approached by the Game Warden who asks him for his fishing license.

The fisherman says to the warden, "I did not catch these lobsters, they are my pets. Everyday I come done to the water and whistle and these lobster jump out and I take them for a walk only to return them at the end of the day."

The warden, not believing him, reminds him that it is illegal to fish

without a license. The fisherman turns to the warden and says, "If you don't believe me then watch," as he throws the lobsters back into the water.

The warden says, "Now whistle to your lobsters and show me that they will come out of the water."

The fisherman turns to the warden and says, "What lobsters?"

Lost in Bookstore

A friend and her young son, Reid, were browsing in a large bookstore. Engrossed in making a selection, my friend had lost sight of her child.

"Reid!" she called out, racing through the aisles. "Reid!"

Just as she spotted the boy, she bumped into another customer. "Pardon me, ma'am," he said, "but most folks come here because they already like to read. No sense in wasting your time trying to convince them."

Another Try

Office Boy: "Please sir, could I have tomorrow afternoon off?"

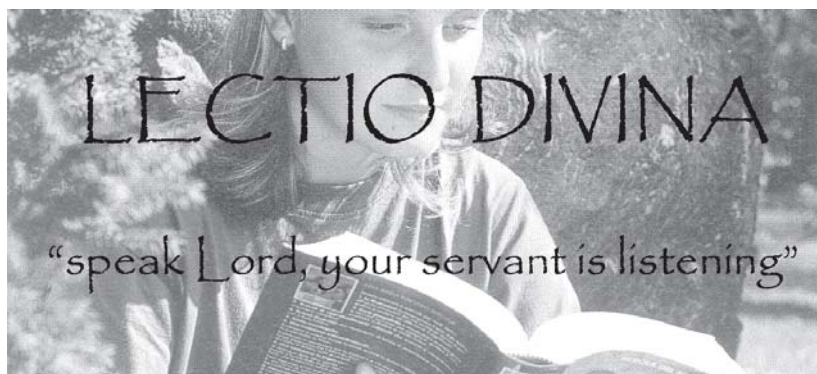
Boss: "Ah, yes, that same old excuse about your grandmother, I suppose."

Office Boy: "Exactly, sir, she's making her first parachute jump."

All in the Family

John: "What made you oversleep this morning?"

James: "There are seven of us in the house and the alarm was only set for six." □



Our Father...but deliver us from evil!

by Roberta Fora

The evil that is in the world exists in mankind and consequently in each of us.

The Christian has a sure means of combatting this evil: humility. S/he is one who has a humble heart, who recognizes his or her own faults, knows how to discover his or her own weaknesses and then trusts completely in the mercy of God.

It is useful to note that the 'Our Father' is a prayer that begins with the word "Father" and ends with the word "evil." I believe that this is indeed a confirmation of the essential tenet of our faith that God the Father is stronger than any evil

and His forgiveness is infinitely greater than any of our faults. Because of this, even if Christian life is a constant and dramatic warfare between the 'Father' and 'evil' we have no need to fear as He is always more efficacious in erasing or expunging all our anguish and guilt.

Certainly, to acknowledge ourselves as sinners and in need of pardon is never easy. Above all it requires a slow and gradual journey that begins in the family at a very tender age.

Children grow up following the example of their parents.

It is obvious that a child that grows up in a Christian family, where the members are in the habit of forgiving one another and who frequently approach the sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) will be more accustomed and will find it much easier to examine their own consciences and admit their own weakness.

If that is so we need not lose hope: at times the Lord is unpredictable,





he manifests himself and we will recognize him in the most ingenious, original and unexpected ways.

Therefore, in praying the Our Father and reciting the last sentence "deliver us from evil," we are

earnestly asking the Lord to take out of our lives the terrible habits that estrange us from Him, the idols and the false gods that we inappropriately put in place of Him.

Lord, make us more docile and humble, so that we may know how to recognize that we are poor sinners in need of your mercy. Increase our faith that we may rediscover Your goodness and sense our "littleness" before your greatness.

Remove from us and around us all that is evil so that, with Your help, we may daily walk the road that leads us to You, witnessing to the true joy that only You can give.

POPE BENEDICT XVI *on the Our Father*

(*Jesus of Nazareth* p. 164 -166)

The last petition of the Our Father takes up the previous one again and gives it a positive twist. The two petitions are therefore closely connected. In the next-to-last petition the *not* set the dominant note (do not give the Evil One more room to maneuver than we can bear). In the past petition we come before the Father with the hope that is at the centre of our faith: "Rescue, redeem, free us!" In the final analysis, it is a plea for redemption. What do we want to be redeemed from? The new German translation of the Our Father says "*vom Bösen*," thus leaving it open whether "evil" or "the Evil One" is meant. The two are ultimately inseparable. The personification of the evil that threatens to devour us...is coupled with the erosion of ethical principles by a cynical form of skepticism and enlightenment.

Thus imperiled, the Christian in time of persecution calls upon the Lord as the only power that can save him: "deliver us, free us from evil." Today there are on the one hand the forces of the market, of traffic in weapons, in drugs, and in human beings, all forces that weigh upon the world and ensnare humanity irresistibly. Today, on the other hand, there is also the ideology of success, of well-being, that tells us, "God is just fiction, he only robs us of our time and our enjoyment of life. Don't bother with him! Just try to squeeze as much out of life as you can." These temptations seem irresistible as well. The Our Father in general and this petition in particular are trying to tell us that it is only when we have lost God that you have lost yourself; then you are nothing more than a random product of evolution. □

Quiet

THE EUCHARIST AND THE MISSIONS OF THE CHURCH

by Antoinette

Throughout history the people of God have always shared in the Redeemer's "thirst" (cfr Jn 19, 28) to "reconcile all things in him." Among God's people it was the saints who eminently experienced this thirst and took upon themselves, by word and example to bring to the feet of the Redeemer all the "scattered children of Israel." About four hundred years ago St. Francis Xavier came to our shores to assuage our Redeemer's thirst and in his urge to seek out collaborators from his homeland he wrote to his superior St. Ignatius of Loyola: "Many out here fail to become Christians only because there is nobody prepared to undertake the task of teaching them... I have often felt moved to go to the universities of Europe, especially the Sorbonne in Paris, shouting like a madman, saying to those who have more learning than goodwill to employ it advantageously. If only, while they studied their humanities, they would also study the accounting that God will ask for the talent he has given them! Many might be moved to say, 'Lord, here I am; what would you have me do?'" (V. Dasan, sj, *His Word Lives*, p.112)

Re-launching the mission "ad gentes" requires courage and means proclaiming Christ as the Redeemer of every human person as John Paul II said at New Delhi: "The Church's faith in Jesus is a gift received and a gift to be shared; it is the greatest gift which the Church can offer to Asia. Sharing the truth of Jesus Christ with others is the solemn duty of all who have received the gift of faith. In my Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, I wrote that "the Church, and every individual Christian within her, may not keep hidden or monopolize this newness and richness which has been received from God's bounty in order to be communicated to all mankind." (John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, #10)

This strenuous task demands tremendous courage considering the hostility that the message of Christ continues to receive in some quarters but our hope and our strength comes from contemplating Christ in the Eucharistic presence with the eyes of Mary. She was the closest person to him even as he ascended the mount of Calvary to be crucified for the salvation of humankind. He did not "leave us orphans" but gave himself to us as a perpetual presence in the Eucharist. As Mary looked "on him whom they had pierced" she drew from him the strength to walk those dark hours till on Easter morning he revealed to her his risen body, the sure sign that he would be with us "until the end of time."

It is this faith that spurs us Christians onward because we know that "the Eucharist builds the Church and the Church makes the Eucharist." Therefore we have to share in the Mission of the Church which is to further the mission of Christ (cfr Jn 20, 21). For this we

AND THE MISSION CHURCH

le Tetta

draw spiritual strength from communing with Christ's body and blood. The goal of the Eucharist is precisely "communion of mankind with Christ and in him with the Father and the Holy Spirit." Whenever we take part in the Eucharistic sacrifice we become profoundly aware of the universality of redemption and consequently the urgency of the Church's mission.

Therefore at the end of every Mass, when the celebrant takes leave of the assembly he proclaims forcefully: "*Ite, Missa est*," ("go you are sent forth!") This admonition ought to make the Christian feel that he is being commissioned and sent forth to take the message of Christ as "Missionaries of the Eucharist." In fact anyone who has encountered Christ in the Eucharist proclaims by his life the merciful love of the Redeemer. By the same token then, living the Eucharistic life urges us to spend time before the Blessed Sacrament - the sacramental presence of Christ. The Second Vatican Council affirms that "it is the source and summit of all Christian life," "the source and summit of all evangelization." (SC #8)

Therefore the Church announces the good tidings of salvation to those who do not believe, so that all may know the one true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent and may be converted from their ways, doing penance... (cf. Jn 17:3; Lk 24:27; Acts 2:38) To evangelize the world there is need of apostles who are "experts" at the celebration and the contemplation of the Eucharist, not just the celebration nor just the contemplation either but both!

It is to this banquet and sacrifice that all of us are invited so that we may partake in the very life of Christ and thus nourished by him we ought to understand our missionary task by becoming "acceptable as an offering, made holy by the Holy Spirit" (Rom 15, 16). Our lives will then witness that we are "one, in heart and mind" (Acts 4, 32) in order that the world may recognise the face of Christ.

The Holy Spirit who overshadowed the blessed Virgin Mary powerfully guides the Christian Community on its daily pilgrimage aware that it will encounter problems, obstacles and even persecutions as part of the mystery of the Cross, but it faithfully soldiers on bravely, comforted by the presence of Christ in the Eucharist who is their pledge of the final triumph of good over evil.

That we may cherish the presence of Christ in our midst and strive to make him known to those who have never known him we turn our gaze to Mary, the, "Woman of the Eucharist" hearing her wise words: "Do whatever he tells you," that we may be able to turn the insipid water of our mundane existence into the "new wine" of the Kingdom where Christ will be all things to everyone. □



The story so far:

John Campbell hopes to marry Carol Martin, but his rival, Gerald O'Rourke is trying to win her affections. Gerald discovers that a stranger he has injured in an accident is a brother of John's mother, who has spent some time in prison in his younger days for robbery. Carol's father has also discovered the man's identity, it seems, for he confronts John angrily.

I hear that this man Gerald knocked down is your uncle,' said Carol's father accusingly.

John straightened his shoulders. 'He is,' he answered.

'And how is it that we never heard of him until now?'

John was trapped. If he told James Martin that he hadn't

known of his uncle's existence until the previous day that would reflect badly on his mother. So he looked down and said nothing.

'Hmm. You've no answer to that. Well, I can tell you that I know why you kept him away from all of us, not even admitting his existence. I know all about it. And I can tell you, young man, that yours is not the kind of family I'd want my daughter to be depending on, and...' 'Daddy!' Carol's face was white as she rose to her feet.

'I mean it,' her father went on angrily. 'And John here is as much involved in it as the rest of them.'

John held his head high. 'I see. Well, since I'm so unwelcome, I'll be going. Goodbye, Carol.'

He walked out into the street and out of Carol's life, his world in fragments around him.

He had arranged to drive his mother to the hospital that morning to visit her brother, and he resolved not to add to her

distress by telling her what had happened. It was a great effort for him to appear normal. Patrick was sitting up in bed, and when he saw them approaching, he looked surprised and apprehensive. John's mother took his hand.

'Patrick, I'd have come to see you last night, but they told me you were asleep, and the doctor didn't want you to be disturbed. How are you?'

'Not too bad at all, Kate. They tell me I'll be here for a few weeks, and then...'

'Then what?' asked John's mother, with a concerned expression on her face.

'I don't know,' said Patrick. 'I suppose I could go back to England, but...'

'I've been thinking about that. Have you anyone there to look after you?'

'I have a rented room, and I look after myself.'

'Well, you won't be able to look after yourself for the present, so when you leave here, you'll come and stay with us.'

John saw tears gathering in Patrick's eyes. 'But Kate,' he said, 'the longer I'm in this town, the more people will find out about me. I realize that now. I should never have come here.'

John's mother said, 'What's past is past. And let people mind their own business. I just hope that you won't...' She hesitated.

John interjected quickly, almost angrily, 'He's given up gambling, and he's paid back all he owed with interest. I told you that, Mum.'

'Yes. Yes, I know. I was just - anxious.'

What John's mother didn't know was that James Martin had

found out who Patrick was and what kind of record he had, and that he had roundly condemned the whole family. Nor did she know that James Martin had made it clear that he didn't want his daughter to be involved with such a family. Worst of all, she didn't realize that Carol herself had changed towards John. Now the way was open for that nasty Gerald O'Rourke...

John's jaw set. If Carol was like that, it was just as well that their romance was at an end, he thought. But his heart was taking longer than his head to reach that conclusion, and the pain of losing her was sharp and deep. John sat with his head lowered, so that when he heard footsteps approaching the bed, he had to look up to see who it was. He turned and, to his amazement, saw James Martin come to a halt by Patrick's side.

'Well, Patrick, you look brighter this morning. You were in a lot of pain last night,' James said.

'I didn't know whether you were really here last night, or if I was dreaming,' said Patrick. 'I had forgotten that you came from this area. Does Martin's Hotel still belong to you?'

'It does. And I very nearly lost it, as you know.'

'I had forgotten what your business was, James. It was a long time ago.'

'Well, I don't want to disturb these people,' James Martin said, with a frosty emphasis on the last two words, 'so I'll come back for a chat with you later on. And if you want anything, just get one of the nurses to ring me.'

John stood up, and looked James

Martin straight in the eye. 'What are you doing here, after all you said about not wanting your daughter to become involved with a family like ours?'

James turned a stern face towards him. 'I said I didn't want my daughter to be *dependent* on a family like yours. I don't want her involved with people who would turn their backs on one of their own, leave him to a life of loneliness and rejection, and pretend he didn't exist. To behave like that is cold, hard and unchristian. A member of such a family would make no husband for my daughter.'

'John was kind to me,' Patrick cut in sharply. 'He never knew he had an uncle until he met me yesterday. You can't blame him, James.'

'You can blame me,' John's mother said steadily, her eyes fixed on James Martin's face. 'I never told my children that I had a brother, and when Patrick arrived in the town the night before last, it was I who insisted that he must be persuaded to leave again.'

'But now you've asked me to go and stay with you when I leave the hospital,' Patrick put in.

'Did you?' James Martin asked, his eyes sharp.

'I did. And it's no credit to me, after the way I've behaved towards him for so long.' She now looked in puzzlement at James Martin. 'But how do you know Patrick?'

There was a faint smile on James Martin's face now. He found a chair for himself, and sat down.

'I met him in a clinic when he was struggling to overcome his

gambling addiction, and I was trying to overcome alcoholism. That was before you ever came to live in this town. We became friends then, but afterwards we went our separate ways, and lost touch with each other. It was only when I heard about Gerald O'Rourke's car knocking down a man called Patrick McCarthy that I wondered if it could be the same man. I came up here to the hospital last night, and when I discovered that it was indeed my old friend, I was very angry at the way his family had kept his existence hidden for so long.'

'What does Carol...' John could not finish the sentence.

'Carol jumped to conclusions too, and believed that you were involved in cutting this poor man off from his family. She said she found it hard to believe that of you, but the evidence seemed overwhelming.'

John said, 'I'd better go and see her.'

James Martin smiled. 'You'd better. And tell her that your uncle here is willing to give you a good recommendation.'

John's mother leaned over Patrick and spoke to him gently.

'John has been fighting for you against me since he found out who you are. Patrick, I hope you'll forgive me.'

'If we all forgive each other, and start a new page, we'll all be happy yet,' Patrick said.

John slipped out quietly, a broad smile on his face and a bright glint in his eye. 'Carol, I'm coming,' he whispered to himself, as he started the car and let in the clutch. 'I'm coming, I'm coming, I'm coming.' □ *The End*

Don Bosco: The Times, The Man, The Facts

DON BOSCO AND THE MISSIONS

by Natale Cerrato (T/A:ID)

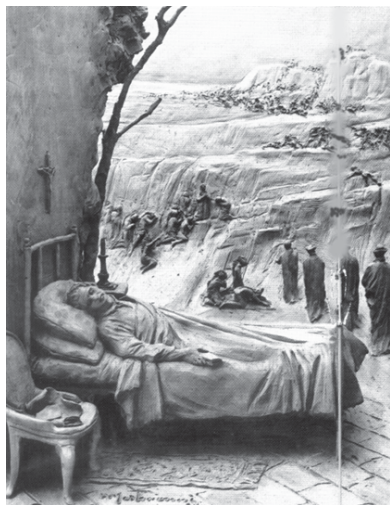
Ever since he was a young cleric Don Bosco thought about the missions. Knowing the history of the Church and how much had been done for the spread of the Gospel it excited in him the desire to dedicate all his energies to building up of the Kingdom of God in the world. He was ordained a priest in 1841 and entered the Ecclesiastical College hostel (*Convitto Ecclesiastico*) in Turin under the guidance of Father Joseph Cafasso, before whom he placed his two great desires: to care for poor and abandoned youngsters and his desire to go to the missions. He was advised by Father Cafasso



not to think of going to missions lands, so he began his Oratory at Turin, nurtured ecclesiastical and religious vocation and founded the Salesian Society that became a Missionary Congregation.

From 1849 young Michael Rua, his successor in guiding the congregation, often heard him saying: "Oh, how much good I could do if only I had twelve priests at my disposal!" (EBM 3,383)

He constituted his first nucleus of Salesians in 1859 and his interest in the missions grew to the point of speaking of it more frequently, poring over geographical maps, pointing out territories that had yet to be evangelized. In 1869 he received the definitive approval of the Salesian Congregation and he did not waste any time in addressing



A bas relief of Don Bosco's missionary dream

the missionary problem. After 1874 there were no more doubts about the missionary dimension of the Salesian Congregation and requests for foundations in Asia, America and Africa only increased.

Missionary Dreams

Providence provided him with more significant indications in five great missionary dreams from 1872 to 1886. The first was the one on Patagonia, the second and the third were on other nations in Latin America, the fourth was on Africa and China and the last was a glance at the missionary expansion of the Congregation around the world from Valparaiso to Beijing.

Did he believe in these visions? Don Bosco was a dreamer and a great one too. In his imagination he saw the field of his apostolate as traced out by the Lord for his missionaries and he saw this with the faith of a believer and the zeal of an apostle. We should not too easily reduce his dreams to mere pedagogical shrewdness. Nevertheless in Don Bosco's missionary dreams it is well to distinguish between possibly human elements and real divine inspirations.

The important part of dreams is the general theme and message. The other things were the environmental details that could have been the fruit of prior knowledge or Don Bosco's lively imagination. Yet, these dreams undoubtedly have great spiritual value that is recognizable in their general theme. The historian Father Charles Socol, a



The Marco Polo Aqueduct

missionary in China, synthesizes the message into three elements:

1. The salvation of the souls as the main priority and purpose of the mission ("*da mihi animas*");
2. The preferential option of the Salesians for the evangelization of poor and needy youth;
3. The characteristics of Salesian Missionary work: Work and Temperance ("*cetera tolle*").

Don Bosco's Testament and the Two Dreams on China

In what is called the Spiritual Testament of Don Bosco we read:

"In its time our missions will reach China and precisely Beijing. But do not forget that we are there for poor and abandoned youngsters. There, among the unknown and those ignorant of the true God they will see unbelievable miracles that have not been seen till now and believed but the power of God will be made manifest to the world" (PB - ISS n. 4, p. 59).

In 1885 Don Bosco had a dream that revealed to him God's plans for the future. On 2nd July he told the members of the General Council. He had made a trip to the centre of Africa "the land of Cam" and in the lands of Arfaxad."

This enigmatic Arfaxad is mentioned in the tenth chapter of the book of Genesis. In his work



Salesian Martyr Saints
Louis Versiglia
and Callistus Caravario

The History of the Church Rohrbacker affirmed that Arfaxad descended from the Chinese. Don Bosco then concluded that they ought to go to China.

In the dream he had at Barcelona on the night between 9th and 10th April 1886, Don Bosco saw once again the land of China and precisely a great city through which a river flowed and over which some great bridges were built: Beijing!

In actual fact Beijing is not built on the banks of a river. If you exclude a little waterway with five bridges, a modern aqueduct and a large artificial lake, there are no rivers that flow through the city. The river is outside the city and some 30 km away with the famous marble bridge called "Marco Polo Bridge". The Yellow river is a fair distance from there. Yet, apart this uncertain and inaccurate detail, it is evident that China was in Don Bosco's mind.

But the Shepherdess, who

served as his guide in the dream he had when he was nine years old told him to have courage:

"Do not be upset. This will be done by your children and your children's children and their children; but firmly adhere to the rules and the spirit of the Congregation."

"But where do we find so many people? And how should we send missionaries to these places?"

"Look," replied the Shepherdess.

"Do not fear! Do just one thing: recommend to your sons that they constantly cultivate the virtues of Mary."

"Well, yes, that is what I intend to do!" Don Bosco replied.

Dreams Become Realities

In the year 2006 the Salesians celebrated the centenary of their work in China, a work that was started in 1906 by Father Luigi Versiglia, with two other priests and three lay members of the Salesian family.

In 1930 the martyrdom of Mons. Versiglia and Father Callisto Caravario was not only seed of Christians but also of other Salesian Chinese martyrs who died for their faith in Mao's China like Father Joseph Fu and Cleric Peter Ye.

Therefore, going by the substance of Don Bosco's dreams, we can surely see that a sizable part of them have been realized. Don Bosco was an inspired dreamer and a brave visionary who undertook apparently impossible missionary enterprises. His boundless trust in Divine Providence and his heroic response to the divine call threw open limitless horizons to his sons to spread the Gospel of Christ the Lord! ▣

Vatican

The Vatican has given final approval to a set of statutes for the Neocatechumenal Way, confirming the movement's unique approach to adult evangelization but insisting on close ties with local bishops and parishes.

The statutes, consigned to leaders of the movement on June 13th after several years of review, also introduced a new way of distributing the Eucharist during their liturgies.

Kiko Arguello and Carmen Hernandez, the Spanish founders, welcomed the approval and said it would launch the movement on a new wave of evangelization.

At a press conference on June 13th the 69-year-old Arguello told how he initiated the movement in 1964 among Gypsies, the homeless and others living on the margins of society. He described the Neocatechumenal Way's mission as a "battle" to reach young adults.

"This means that we, after these statutes, can begin the new evangelization. We have thousands of families in mission, thousands of young people, 70 seminaries and many opportunities," he said.

The statutes, approved by the Pontifical Council for the Laity, are similar to experimental rules adopted in 2002. They described the Neocatechumenal Way as "an instrument at the service of the bishop for the rediscovery of Christian initiation on the part of baptized adults."

The movement, the statutes said,



A file photo shows Kiko Arguello, founder of the Neocatechumenal Way, playing the guitar during a special audience with Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican, January 12, 2006

is especially aimed at those who have drifted away from the Church, those insufficiently catechized, those who want to deepen their faith and those who come from other Christian communities.

The statutes made clear that the Neocatechumenal Way has no material goods, but administers "spiritual goods" under a bishop's jurisdiction. It is the bishop who authorizes the movement's activity in his diocese and who monitors its programme to ensure harmony with local parishes, they said.

The statutes say the programmes should be coordinated with local parish activities, and the movement

should promote among its adherents "a mature sense of belonging to the parish."

More specifically, the statutes said the movement's weekly Mass – celebrated in small communities on Saturday evening – now forms part of the parish liturgy and must be open to other members of the parish.

On the issue of Communion, in the past, members of the Neocatechumenal Way have baked their own loaves of unleavened bread and have received the consecrated bread and wine while seated around the table. Under the new rules, the members will receive Communion under both species while standing at their seats at Mass. Instead of lining up and moving toward the altar to receive Communion, the priest will come to them. (CNS)

Konigstein

The global food crisis could close the Catholic seminary in the central Nigerian city of Makurdi as astronomical prices force food rationing here.

According to Aid to the Church in Need (ACN), the major seminary has at least 520 seminarians from 15 dioceses around the country. The seminary's food problems are compounded by electricity supply problems caused by the rising price of diesel, which has increased by one third in just one week.

Seminarians' home dioceses are also taxed by rising food and gas prices.

Since the food crisis began in April, the seminary has taken out credit to function. Seminary rector Monsignor Kenneth Enang told

ACN that he may be forced to close the seminary before the students begin to suffer from malnutrition and the debts increase further.

Monsignor Enang said that the seminary had only recently been planning to expand because of inadequate space. The number of seminarians had increased to 520 from 400. Feeding seminarians is a major expense for African seminaries. The global food crisis could threaten other seminaries in the Third World. (CNA)

Jerusalem

Jordanian archaeologists say they have found the world's first Christian church in the northern city of Rihab, but international scholars question the validity of the claim.

A cave that Jordanians say was used as a church was discovered underneath the already existing St. Georgeous Church, which dates back to between the years 290 or 300 AD. The size of the cave has not been specified.

St. Georgeous is considered to be among the oldest churches in the world along with one found in 1998 in Aqaba, Jordan, and another found by Israeli archaeologists in 2005 from the first part of the third century in Megiddo, in northern Israel.

The discovery of the church-cave was "amazing," Abdel-Qader al-Housan, director of the Rihab Center for Archaeological Studies, told The Jordan Times June 9.

"We have evidence to believe this church sheltered the early Christians: the 70 disciples of Jesus Christ," he said. (CNS)

GUWAHATI,

About 5,000 people attended the funeral of a Benedictine brother who pioneered evangelization in Arunachal Pradesh, a state once forbidden to missionaries, Brother Henry Gaikwad, 55, popularly known as *Prem Bhai* (loving brother) among people in the predominantly tribal north eastern state, was buried on July 3 at an ashram he built near Itanagar, the state capital, 2,200 kilometers east of New Delhi. He died of a heart attack on June 27 while visiting Colombo. About 250 priests and hundreds of nuns were present for the funeral.

Salesian Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil of Guwahati, from the neighbouring Assam state, led the funeral service. He had been closely associated with the beginnings of the Arunachal mission. The prelate hailed Brother Gaikwad as "an icon of humanitarian service" for the people of Arunachal Pradesh who "will stand tall in the history of missions in North East India."

Archbishop Menamparampil told UCA News the late evangelizer "walked more than 45,000 kilometers over the hills and valleys" of the state during 25 years of mission work. The 83,743-square-kilometer state borders Bhutan, China and Myanmar.

Capuchin Fr Joseph Zechariah, who also knew Brother Gaikwad, told UCA News the pioneering missionary entered Arunachal Pradesh as a worker "at a time when no priest or Religious was allowed to enter the state."

The Benedictine brother, a native of Maharashtra state, western India, arrived in Arunachal in 1982, when government regulations prohibited Christian priests and missionaries

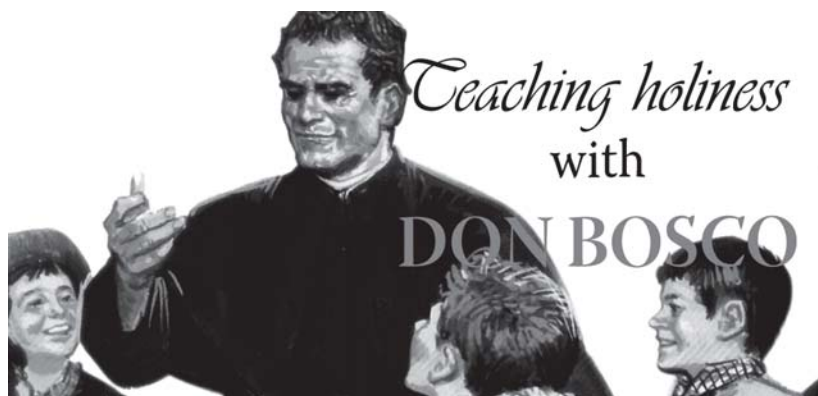
from preaching or ministering there. The first permanent church in the state opened only in 1993, but today the two Catholic dioceses there have about 170,000 members, 16 percent of the state's 1.09 million people.

Brother Gaikwad was "always on the move," confirmed Fr Kulandai Swami. "Nothing could hold him back - bad weather, food, or poor accommodation," he added, recalling that the brother "prayed over the sick, accompanied the sick to the hospital and got poor children admitted to schools in Assam."

Fransaliam Father Mathew Puthumana, who also was associated with the brother, hailed him as a "very simple, unassuming, highly committed" missionary who slept on a plank or wood, using another plank as a pillow. His slippers, the priest also pointed out, were made from truck tires to avoid wearing out, and he was always talking about evangelization.

In a condolence message, Bishop John Kattrukudiyil of Itanagar, who was on an overseas tour, called Brother Gaikwad "the Apostle of Arunachal Pradesh." The bishop pointed out, "There may not be any village in Arunachal Pradesh that he has not visited."

The Benedictine Brother "possessed tremendous strength" that enabled him to stand against all odds and confusions, he continued, saying the Arunachal Church "owes much to this great personality." Salesian Bishop George Palliparampil of Miao the other diocese in the state, agreed, telling UCA: "Yes, he was a pioneering missionary." (UCAN) □



FRANCIS BESUCCO

The importance of Christian Education

by Claudio Russo

In the beginning was the mother." This is how a book on Don Bosco starts and launches out with a discourse on mamma Margaret. The expression underlines the importance of parents and of education for the Christian development of the children. This was so for Francis Besucco one of the boys of Don Bosco's Oratory. In this article we review life at home with the family before he reached Valdocco.

Francis was born on March 10, 1850. His father Matthew and his mother Rosa were peasants, poor but honest and very religious. They chose as his godfather the parish priest of Argentera Father Francis Pepino and his godmother was the mother of the parish priest, Anna.

From the time he was little his father Matthew and his mother Rosa educated their little Francis in the Faith. They took him to church

with them, taught him to make the Sign of the Cross, to kneel and to recite the simplest of prayers, the morning and evening prayers.

Even Fr. Pepino helped Francis to grow up as a man and as a Christian. The fruits were visible: "he seemed unbelievably composed for a youngster of his age" the townsfolk commented when they saw him in church.

In the mornings, as soon as he opened his eyes, he made the Sign of the Cross, got down from his bed and prayed: "My soul, rise up, look up to heaven and love Jesus who loves you, leave the world and all its deceptions, and know that one day you will leave this earth, your body will perish, and you will be able to praise the Madonna. Then he prayed the "Hail Mary" three times. In the beginning Francis

repeated this prayer mechanically because he did not know the meaning of the expressions. He then asked his parents for the meaning of those words. "Now I can recite it with greater devotion," exclaimed Francis with much satisfaction.

Francis obeyed his parents and reproached his sisters and brothers for being distracted or when they were busy with other things and did not listen to their parents. "It's been half an hour since mother asked you to do that, why are you waiting? Why do we displease someone who loves us so much?"

At times it was the other way about. His brothers and sisters would reproach him for some shortcoming. He listened to them. He did not want to offend them and so he did what they told him. He realized that they told him things for his own good. He confided to them his thoughts and plans and asked them to correct him and help him overcome his own defects.

"See, how much I love you!"

On returning from school Francis would run and embrace his father and mother. He never complained if his lunch was less or not very tasty. On the other hand, the economic conditions of the family were difficult and Francis knew this very well. Even though he was little he had "his feet firmly planted on the ground."

Francis loved his mother and father and demonstrated this not only in words but above all by his behavior. He acknowledged how much they did for him and he thanked them. When his brothers or sisters exclaimed: "Francis, it is easy for you to be always happy, you are the Benjamin of us all." He

would reply, "Yes, that is true, but I always endeavour to be good so as to deserve your love."

That was really true. If he received some small gift or earned some money for having run an errand, then, as soon as he reached home he placed it in his parents' hands exclaiming: "see how much I love you!"

On winter evenings Francis remained in the family room in the company of his parents studying or completing his homework. Before going to sleep he invited everyone to recite the Rosary with him. In the concluding prayer Francis prayed to God especially for his father and his brothers as they went out at different times during the winter to work and earn something for the family.

The Tail End for Confession

His parents prepared him to approach the sacrament of Reconciliation. On this journey he was also assisted by the Parish Priest. Father Pepino was convinced that if he wanted good parishioners he needed to take care of the Faith formation of the children. For this he dedicated a lot of time in the confessional hearing the confessions of the children and teaching them catechism in every season of the year and whenever it was possible he went to the school of the children. He also went even to the places of work of the adults, to the meadows while the peasants were bringing in the livestock to pasture. Francis Besucco was among the boys to whom he taught catechism.

On the evening of the preceding day of his confession Francis

asked his father if he was free to come with him to church. How could he say no to such a good child? Papa Matteo always freed himself from his other engagements. Francis, prepared himself to meet the Lord with an examination of conscience and prolonged prayer. When he reached the church he stood in the line and allowed the others to go before him into the confessional. "This consideration of Francis for the others, especially during the cold winter months compelled me at times to call him into the confessional seeing that he was almost freezing," the priest said. "I asked him why he allowed others to go ahead of him and Francis replied: 'I can afford to wait because my parents do not scold me for spending so much time in church. Perhaps other parents get annoyed if they reach home late, especially if they are women with children.'"

Francis' parents left Francis free to attend Mass everyday. When he

was undecided because he feared that he would be neglecting his household chores, his father and mother reassured him that it was alright and urged him to go. "The time employed in hearing Mass will be abundantly compensated during the day because God is a good paymaster and I will gladly work harder," Francis reassured them.

Even if Francis was a good boy, he did sometimes get into quarrels. His parents hastened to correct him without delay and Francis apologized: "I won't do that again and I'll try to be a better boy. You scold me, but I know you understand me and forgive me." He would run and embrace them in tears.

The parents never had reason to punish him. The Christian education Francis received would eventually bear good fruit. □



LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

Dearest Mother thank you for all your blessings on our family, and also for the success of our son in his examination.

Theresa & Nelson, Mumbai

Through the intercession of Our Blessed Mother, my husband Edwin D'Souza secured a good job at Doha. I am grateful also for the many other favours received. *Mrs. Janet L. D'Souza, Doha-Qatar*
A few days ago I went to the bank with a cheque and the cashier gave me the wrong amount and when I went back to him he ignored me telling me that it was none of his business. Later after the bank closed I went there and he gave me the correct amount. I believe it was Our Blessed Lady and without her there was no hope of getting the money.

Mrs. C. Nazareth, Goa

We are immensely grateful to Our blessed Mother for a safe delivery and for blessing us with a beautiful daughter.

Mrs. Irene & Mr. Bernard Carvalho, Gurgaon

My most grateful thanks to the Holy Spirit and Our Blessed Mother Mary for healing me of severe pains in my back and neck and also for the many blessings we have received.

Mrs. Arlene deSouza, Melbourne, Australia

My belated thanks to my beloved Jesus and Mary Help of Christians for blessing me with a good husband and for my mother's successful operation and for innumerable blessings showered on us.

Mrs. Fernandes, Mumbai

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

I am most grateful to Our Lady for protecting me on more than one occasion when a vehicle lost control and plowed into a group of people, no one was seriously injured.

Neville D'Silva, Nilgiris

My sincere thanks to Our Lady for protecting my wife and myself from what could have been a serious accident.

Denzil A. James, Junagadh

Thank you to Our Blessed Lord and Our Lady for the marriage of S. Fernandes,

Mary D'Costa, Mumbai

My belated thanks to My Beloved Lord Jesus and to Mary Help of Christians for granting us the sale of our flat and for keeping us constantly under your protection.

Mrs. Claudia D'Souza, Thane

Sincere gratitude to Mary Help of Christians for numerous favours received.

Mrs. Edna Sequeira, Mangalore

Many, many thanks to the Most Blessed Trinity and dear Mother Mary for granting me a normal report and a successful interview.

P. Ruby, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to our Lord and Our Lady for all the favours received.

Tony and Sandra Candes

THE DEVOTION OF THE THREE HAIL MARYS



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

I am grateful to Our blessed Mother for her protection in what could have been a dreadful accident. I was in an autorickshaw that was partially crushed by a truck that was reversing. It stopped in time but not before damaging the front of the auto first and then coming to a halt. I constantly pray the three Hail Marys.

Franklin Xavier Borges, Ahmednagar

Thank you Mother for every passing moment of life. Help us to dwell according to our Saviour's Word and protect us from all evil and dangers.

Alex D'Costa, Goa

Thank you dear Mother Mary for the many favours received through the faithful recitation of the three Hail Marys. *Antonietta Simoes, Macau*

Thank you Mother Mary for blessing me with a good job.

Sujit Pinto, Dubai

My sincere thanks to dear Mother Mary for healing my knee and for helping me to walk perfectly and for granting me many other favours through the faithful recitation of the three Hail Marys.

Joanita Pereira, Naigaon

Thank you dear Mother Mary for all the favours and blessings received through the recitation of the 3 Hail Marys. *Maria Furtado, Goa*

Thank you dear Mother Mary, through the recitation of the 3 Hail Marys, my daughter Samantha was promoted to TY BSc and my son Joshua to Std. X.

Sebastian Fernandes, Bahrain

Thank you for bringing me home dear Mother Mary through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys. *Henry Angelo D'Costa, Mumbai*

Through the recitation of the three Hail Marys and the Novena to St. John Bosco from the Blue prayer book my daughter in Australia was blessed with a good job. I am most grateful for all the graces and favours received through her intercession. Do continue to keep us in your tender care.

Mrs. M. Muller, Alleppey

I am grateful to Mother Mary Help of Christians for helping my grandson Kevin pass his SSC exams through the intercession of the three Hail Marys. Grant him good health and take him under your protection.

Romaldina Dias, Goa

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

Dear Lord Jesus Christ, and Mary Most Holy together with St. John Bosco I thank you for showing me the way whenever I am lost and for lifting me up in body, mind and spirit when I am down, for seeing me through life's perilous journey. I make an offering in gratitude for your constant presence in my life

Mrs. P. Samagond, Weston, FL., USA

Our sincere thanks to Our Lady, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the blessings of health granted to our family.

Xavier & Gitty, Chennai

Our sincere thanks to Our Blessed Mother, the Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for all the favours received.

Anthony and Avril Murzello, Melbourne Australia

Our daughter was very unsuccessful at any of the interviews she attended. We were all desperate and prayed to Our Blessed Mother and also through the intercession of Don Bosco and Dominic Savio when she attended the next interview she passed without much trouble. We are most grateful to Our Blessed Mother for her powerful intercession.

Mr. & Mrs. Antao, Goa

For all the favours received we are most grateful to Our Lady and Don Bosco.

Mrs. Corrine D'Souza, Trichy

Our grateful thanks to Our Lady and St. John Bosco for my sister's tests on her foot being clear of cancer.

Mrs. R. James, Australia

Be Christian, be Pleasant

I was watching someone being interviewed on television. He was a surgeon talking about his particular field, which happened to be cancer research. Not a very cheerful subject, I'll admit; but as I watched, the strange thing was, that apart from the admiration I felt for his work, I was even more impressed by his pleasant personality which came across loud and clear as he talked.

He was making no conscious effort to project any particular aspect of his character. He wasn't trying to appear a hero or a saint or a brilliant intellectual or anything like that, but an ordinary man doing a job, and doing it with great care and concern for his patients.

It set me thinking. How do the rest of us come across in our everyday dealings with those lucky or unlucky enough to come in contact with us? I thought it would be just as easy, easier in fact, and a lot better for our blood pressure, to come across as pleasant characters who liked their jobs, and found it a pleasure to serve others.

Most people have problems. When you meet them in the shop or factory or school or wherever, they usually keep the problems well hidden, but the point is, when they leave you, will they feel a bit better for having met you?

If they do, apart from the fact that you'll feel better about it yourself, you'll also have shown what Christianity is all about. □ *(Jack Quinn)*



THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



Our sincere thanks to dear St. Dominic Savio for blessing our lives with a lovely baby. *Schuster and Janice Goveas,*

Abu Dhabi, UAE

My daughter Christina Fernandes was childless for more than 8 years and sincerely wished to have a child. Now thanks to dearest Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio she is blessed with a baby girl. It was born on the 1st May 2008 and we have named her Anaiah.

Mrs. Angelina Dias, Mumbai

Dear Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio thank you for the safe delivery of a lovely

baby girl and for many other favours.

Mrs. G. Ferrao, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for the love, strength and hope I received. I am grateful for saving both my sons who were in the ICU. Now I know that Mary was there taking care of all of us.

Mr. & Mrs. Ernest Rebello, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians and St. Dominic Savio for all the favours received.

Royteon Miranda, Mumbai

Thanks dear Jesus, Mother Mary and Dominic Savio for the safe and normal delivery of my daughter and the gift of a cute and healthy baby boy.

Mrs. A. George, Mumbai

Dear Mother Mary, help of Christians and St. Dominic Savio sincere thanks for the gift of a healthy baby girl and for healing of a skin ailment.

Savio D'Souza, Mumbai

Our sincere thanks to Our Lady, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the safe delivery of a healthy baby girl.

Mrs. Loretta Tereza, Goa

Thank you dear Mother Mary and Dominic Savio for blessing my daughter with the gift of a child after 3 miscarriages and for giving my second daughter a good job in Dubai and my third daughter admission in a good college and for all the favours received.

Anonymous, Kalwa

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

OCTOBER 2008

Holy Father's General Intention: *That those who, because of wars or oppressive regimes, are forced to leave their homes and country may be supported by Christians in defending and protecting their rights.*

Missionary Intention: *That, faithful to the sacrament of Matrimony, every Christian family may cultivate the values of love and communion in order to be a small evangelizing community, sensitive and open to the material and spiritual needs of its sisters and brothers.*

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MARY WAS THERE

On the 15th March 2008 there was an unexpected thunderstorm. We were staying in an old house that had a tiled roof. The wind was blowing around the house and streaks of lightning could be seen through the windows. I called everyone into our room to pray the Rosary. As we began to pray the Rosary there was a sudden sound like an explosion. The lights all went out and all we could sense was dust and something burning in the next room. We finished saying the Rosary and went to sleep. The next morning we realized that lightning had struck the mango tree outside and had come through the antenna into the house. It had destroyed the room next to the room in which we were praying. I am deeply grateful for the protection of Our Blessed Mother and for all her blessings on our family. *(Lynette Rebelo, 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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