

# DON BOSCO'S MADONNA

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*The faithful  
have  
always invoked  
the blessed  
Virgin Mary  
in their  
time of need  
as  
the Mother  
of God*

Cover: **The Face of Jesus**  
by Warner Sallman



## From The Editor's Desk

### The Memory Remains

I am pretty certain of the fact that 'I never forget names or faces' but, much to my embarrassment, this was recently put to the proof when I was called down to meet a gentleman who gave me a kindly familiar greeting, adding the firm assurance that I knew him. In the confusion of jogging my memory I failed to place either his face or his name much to my embarrassment. Even later, after he had left, he called back and kindly gave me the benefit of the doubt by telling me that I was pretending that I hadn't remembered him.

When a kind person is making an introduction he will always include a name: 'And of course, you have already met...' I realize that it is a blessing for someone like me who boasts of remembering but often does not. Another gracious person spying my hesitation might helpfully chime in with, 'Of course, he does; we met recently at the home of a mutual friend'. Surely this hint will jog my failing memory! If even that fails, I am certain my friend feels ashamed or at least disappointed, if not downright insulted.

If we are not remembered, can we really say we ever met?

We may become complacent, saying it is natural that with the passing years, we remember less and less. Occasionally we suspect that we might be too indulgent in this judgement, when actually our poor memory is really laziness. I have even got some tips from professionals that claim I will improve if I follow their suggestions. Sadly, I cannot remember when the hints last worked for me.

I have reflected on meetings which I have never forgotten – and I made some surprising discoveries: it always involved *going* to meet that person. Sometimes it meant a *physical* journey; more often it was a meeting free from expectations or formalities; an openness not hampered by reservations, and hospitable to being surprised.

If we are seated, we *rise* to meet someone. It is a *going out* to meet them. Just as we stand for the Gospel for Mass. That is one of the few times we stand at Mass. It is a movement forward to meet Christ.

The Gospel passage that is proclaimed does not list rules; rather it recounts more often than not a meeting Christ has with a man in pain or a woman in distress. He *met* them. They knew that he would not forget them. And the meeting was so important for them that it was endlessly repeated, and then written down and preserved in the Gospel story, and is read year after year to the people of God.

To meet Christ in the scriptures we must hear him and listen to him as these people did, we must know that what he says, is said to us today. And we must grasp that no matter whoever else forgets, he never will.

Fr. Ian Douulton sdb

## 7. UNEARTHING HIDDEN TALENT

*Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss*

**L**ata Das was travelling in pouring rain one wet monsoon day. She shared the autorickshaw together with 27-year old Chetna, one of her protégés, and her mother. Traversing a stretch dotted with treacherous potholes, suddenly the rickshaw lurched and Lata almost fell out. But to her amazement Chetna, a mentally challenged person, instinctively put her hand out and held on tightly to Lata to prevent her from harm. What was amazing to Lata was that Chetna, because of her mental challenge, was incapable of personally attending to even normal daily functions like bathing or using the toilet. Besides, it is rare for such challenged persons to exhibit any emotions at all. But that short bumpy journey over the hazardous road enlightened Lata about the fact that deep inside even mentally-challenged persons there are latent emotions that can surface at any moment. "I was touched that she cared so much for me. I still can't get over it," she remarked, tears of wonder and pride filling her eyes.

### **Destined to Serve?**

Lata entered the field of voluntary service after her own children had grown up and become independent – she now discovered that she had a lot of time on her hands. She had always desired to teach children and her search about how to use her extra time profitably, brought

her to SOSVA, an NGO that places volunteers in different organizations depending on their skills, experience and liking. Asked whether she would be willing to teach 'special children' at the MBA Foundation School at Powai, she gladly volunteered not knowing what she was letting herself into. Overcoming initial depression at the difficulties of her assigned work, she buckled down to teaching vocational skills like candle making as also meditation, painting and even English when needed.

The MBA Foundation was started by the parents and relatives of special children who are challenged mentally and otherwise, and currently has around 45 children, some of whom are boarders. The original idea was to train these disabled children in various vocations and empower them to earn a living. Having committed herself to care for such 'children' most of whom are well into their thirties, Lata found herself experiencing more and more fulfillment. She has discovered the hidden wealth of love and compassion in them, as happened in the case of Chetna all by accident, and believes that besides earning a living, they could possibly be helped to even live a more or less normal emotional life. Considering them as her very own, she toils to bring out the best in each of those entrusted to her care. Her family too is very supportive and she keeps them abreast of

developments in her activity there through emails and periodic sharings. As for the future, Lata feels she would like to continue teaching and taking care of the inmates as long as they need her.

### **Genesis of a Vocation**

Reflecting on Lata's experience we notice several important steps that need to fall in place like a jigsaw puzzle for such generous service of the needy to materialize and be productive and fruitful. First of all, there was in her the desire to reach out to others, even if she had not been able to concretely spell out all the details. Having harboured this desire for several years during which she could not do anything specific because of her own commitments to family, this ambition which was dormant in her, sprang to life again at the appropriate moment. But while most others might have felt that freedom from pressing family commitments was really the time to sit back and relax, enjoying life for oneself, Lata wisely used it to launch herself into her second career. Her desire to serve was no empty wishful thinking. She was ready to venture into something new and different, realizing that initially it could be hard and demanding.

Next too she took another vital step in the process, perhaps without consciously figuring out its value and importance at the moment of deciding. Asked whether she would like to teach mentally challenged persons, she promptly said yes, not realizing what this would entail. And even after she got first-hand experience of the difficulties involved, she did not back out because of the

unpleasantness of the task at hand. Could we say that there is always an extra joy and fulfillment in every service that forces one to break out of one's comfort zone? And yet, how often do people venture into an area that they are totally unfamiliar with? It calls for the spirit of enterprise and adventure – which has its own rewards and blessings.

### **Inner Inspiration**

It may be worth asking from where does one get that little extra push at the critical juncture to take a really challenging and difficult step along life's arduous journey! Can we trace it back to merely the spirit of adventure, a desire to try out something new, an attempt to reach out beyond one's present horizon, an inner restlessness that spurs one to action, any action perhaps? While all these and several others might be certainly present, faith in oneself and in the Creator beyond, is what enables one to see the hand of destiny leading to one's 'God-given' task in life. Has God not always acted in this way? Why would he have commanded an ageing Abraham in centuries gone by to 'leave your country and your father's house and come into the land that I will show you?' And again, why challenge the decrepit patriarch to 'go up to the mountain and there sacrifice your son, your only son, the son whom you love very much?' Why bulldoze a timorous and hesitant Moses into going back to Egypt and leading his people into freedom; or why compel a youthful Jeremiah to take up the task of prophesying to a stubborn and faithless nation? In each case cited above and in every

other in the Bible, the basic challenge is for the person to break out of her/his comfort zone and step out in faith. "I shall be with you, do not be afraid," is a promise accompanying almost every single one of them. And the persons chosen seem to have that something extra which energized them to at least give it a try!

### **Why am I Different?**

Almost every one of us is at some point or other, challenged to break out of our comfortable routine. Perhaps the reason why so few of us actually do that is the fact that we are circumscribed by fear: fear of the unknown, fear of the future, fear of making mistakes and being punished or ridiculed for them, fear stemming from past unpleasant experiences; there is no end to our fears! And so, we settle for routine, the safe and the tried, for a drab unfulfilling schedule – but the saddest part of this approach is that while all are called to the fullness of life, most choose rather the staid and the proven, going round and round the grinding stone like the bullock or donkey at a mill or a bunch of ants endlessly marching round the rim of a flower-pot, holding on to the rear of the one ahead. But our Eucharistic celebrations when entered into meaningfully, will not allow us to remain for long in this cocoon of safety. So, if we haven't yet stepped out at least sometimes to do something which is difficult and daring, it could be simply because we are basically timid or sorely in need of constant reassurance.

If at all we actively participate in the Eucharistic celebration, we

cannot but be struck by the example of Jesus which we recall at the heart of each Eucharist in the Institution Narrative: 'On the night before he suffered Jesus took the bread ... "Take and eat this is myself given for you!... This is the cup of my blood which is poured out for you." How can one keep on hearing these words day after day and week after week, and not be touched by the disturbing question: 'And what are you doing with your life? When will you begin to break of it and share with the needy? How long will it be before you start pouring out your life-blood for others in need?'

### **Our Response**

Maybe some will answer: 'Yes, Lord, I am ready and willing, but not yet! Tomorrow, or maybe after my children grow up and leave home to begin on their own, or when I retire and my earnings are no longer needed for the family...' Against this background we cannot but recall the words of Jesus to some of his prospective followers: 'He who puts his hand to the plough and then looks back is not worthy of me... leave the dead to bury their dead – you come follow me!' And what would our response be if we add to this the deep realization of how much the Lord has done for us, and continues to do for us each day? When Jesus decided to pour out his life-blood for us, he did not measure out how much he would offer and how much he would keep for himself. He gave even unto the last drop – when just one drop would have sufficed to redeem the entire universe a thousand times over.

*(continued on pg. 22)*



## VOCATION PROMOTION

**"BY THE GRACE OF GOD, I AM WHAT I AM" (1 Cor, 15:10)**

*Fr. Mathew Thalanany, sdb, Vice Rector and Asst. Parish priest,  
St. Dominic Savio Church, Antop Hill, Wadala, Mumbai*

I studied in the school at Bharananganam, Kerala, which is opposite the convent where Sr. Alphonsa lived and died. I am the eldest of five children, born in Plassanal, Kerala, on Dec 6, 1928. One day I found the picture of a smiling saint. Not knowing whose picture it was I liked it and kept it on my desk.

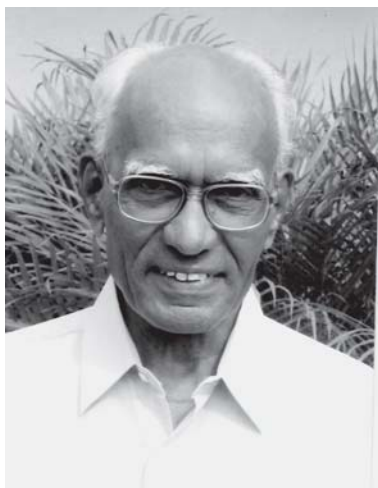
I wanted to become a missionary priest, but my parents were against me going out of Kerala. He was however, very happy when I made my decision to pursue my calling.

When I expressed my intention to my parish priest he had just received a letter from Fr. Carreño asking if any boys were interested in joining the Aspirantate at Tirupattur.

I did not know how to reach Tirupattur but my uncle who was going to Loyola College in Madras agreed to drop me there. It was the first time I was going out of my village. I didn't even know what a train looked like. I landed at Tirupattur on June 16, 1946 and I was shocked that there was not even a blade of grass there (I learnt later that there had been no rain that year).

It was in Fr. Rector's office that I came to know that the smiling saint was Don Bosco. As I stood there, I saw a brother coming out with the poor and orphan boys and going to visit the Blessed Sacrament. This was followed by a good game and then the boys went back to study. They were from the orphanage and there was one rector for both, the Aspirantate and the orphanage.

Those were times of war and conditions were tough. It was the family spirit and camaraderie that kept us going.



Apart from an initial cultural shock, my early crisis was: *I was neither a sportsman, nor a musician, how then could I have a Salesian Vocation?* My rector assured me that this was not a hindrance. "Look at Fr. Castelli: he is neither a sportsman, nor a musician, but a hard working parish priest. You can also work like that". Those prophetic words guided me to work especially for my poor slum people.

The Blessed Virgin Mary has always been my guide and I have a great love for her. This has kept me going. Fr. Carreño who was then the provincial of the Madras Province, asked us to love our Blessed Mother and she would always be our mother and guide. A novena to her has solved many a problem for me!

This year I celebrate my Golden Jubilee of Priestly Ordination, 28 June to be specific. Truly **"By the Grace of God I am what I am"** (1 Cor. 15:10) □

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# KEEPING IT SIMPLE

*By Eithne Murphy*

**F**riendship is one of the most precious gifts of God to people. It is a relationship like no other. It is not rooted in blood ties, but crosses all barriers of race, class, creed and age. It is a spiritual bond, a tapestry of shared likes and dislikes, interests and values; and of course deep affection. We all know that we need friends; life would be very bleak without them.

With true friends we feel really comfortable; we don't feel we have to pretend to be what we are not. We can tell secrets and know they will remain secret. We can confess misdemeanours and faults and know that we are not judged but forgiven and even consoled. We can be companionably silent with real friends, cry with them and laugh with them.

And most of us, if we have any sense, know that we need Christ as a friend in our lives more than we need any friend in this world. Still, it can be difficult sometimes to think of Christ as a true friend like any other. Many of us probably feel at times a bit like the little boy who was frightened to be left alone in the dark. On being told by his daddy that he had nothing to fear, as God was right there with him, he replied plaintively, 'I know - but I'd like someone with skin on him!' Christ can seem a bit remote, a bit vague for us to be able to think of him as a friend.

them very much. We know he visited the home of Martha and Mary and their brother Lazarus. We don't know how Jesus came to be friends of this family. It is possible that he met Lazarus at rabbinical school as they studied the Torah under a learned rabbi, but that of course is pure speculation. What we do know is that he was on easy, intimate terms with the whole family. He was so relaxed with them that he could even give Martha a little ticking-off when he told her that Mary - because she sat and listened



## **Jesus' Gospel Friends**

While Jesus was on earth he had friends, and valued

*'Jesus was on easy, intimate terms with the family of Martha, Mary and Lazarus.'*

to him - had chosen the better part.

I have always felt a certain sympathy, as I think most women do, with Martha on this occasion. But I am willing to admit that she probably was puffing and blowing a bit and generally acting the martyr, fussing out of all proportion, and disturbing the joy of the occasion in the process. Jesus, the true friend, was able to point that out to her.

*Like all friendships  
we must work  
at it. It's no use  
neglecting  
our best pal  
for months and  
then expecting  
that we can just  
pick up  
where we left off.*

### **A Simple Approach**

So, we should try to approach Jesus in a simple way and not try to be terribly grand in our speech. Instead of saying, 'Vouchsafe, O Lord, to incline thine ear' maybe we should try, 'Lord, I've come to have a bit of a chat with you.'

And we don't have to be all

intellectual either: what do most of us know about metaphysics and stuff like that?

Instead why don't we tell him that our back is aching from carrying that parcel that the courier fellow brought, up the stairs (as mine is right now) but that we hope he will enjoy looking at it when I open it in my bedroom. Or we can say we are sorry for getting impatient (again) with Mrs. Morris who will go on and on about her daughter's splendid job. Or we can talk about our secret worries: the children, the leaking gutters, the health of someone we love. We can also tell him of the nice things that are happening: our holidays, the new kitten we've got, the chat at the club - everything and anything. Isn't that the way we talk to our friends?

Like all friendships we must work at it. It's no use neglecting our best pal for months and then expecting that we can just pick up where we left off. It isn't nice to expect our friends to rally to our side every time we are in trouble if we don't include them in our little joys and triumphs too. We need to keep in touch.

If we can think of Jesus in those very human terms we won't go far wrong, and our friendship with him will grow and strengthen through the years. Let's just keep it simple and warm; I honestly think that is how he best likes it. □

### **What sort of people are we?**

♦ Hence, if something happens contrary to our prayer, we should bear it patiently, give thanks in all circumstances, and have not the least doubt that it was more opportune for God's will to be done than our own. *St. Augustine of Hippo*

♦ What sort of people are we - when God gives, we want to receive, when God asks, we refuse to give? *St. Caesarius of Arles*



# walking with the Church



## *Gregorian Masses, Luke 9:5*

*From Zenit.org answered by Fr. Edward McNamara*

**Q.** *I understand a Gregorian Mass to consist of 30 Masses said with unbroken succession. Recently an elderly priest told me that if it is interrupted even for one day, one has to begin the Masses all over. I have also met an elderly religious who was catechizing the lay faithful in the same line. Here then are my questions: 1) Has this Gregorian Mass (or Masses) any liturgical or canonical foundation? 2) Does the effectiveness of the Masses depend on celebrating them without interruption? 3) If this is so (as it is widely held), are we not coming close to superstition or what St. John of the Cross referred to as lack of simplicity of faith? According to him, "These people attribute so much efficacy to methods of carrying out their devotions and prayers and so trust in them that they believe that if one point is missing or certain limits have been exceeded their prayer will be profitless and go unanswered. As a result they put more trust in these methods than they do in the living prayer, not without great disrespect and offense toward God." — P.C., Rome*

**A.** The practice of Gregorian Masses goes back to a tradition hailing from Pope St. Gregory the Great (540-604). According to legend, a deceased monk

appeared and requested 30 Masses to be celebrated for the release of his soul from purgatory. On completion of the stipulated days he appeared once more radiant in heavenly glory.

From this legend the practice of celebrating 30 consecutive Masses for one and the same person with the intention of procuring release from purgatory became an established custom which has been regulated in various ways over the centuries.

Present regulation stems from a declaration published by the Sacred Congregation of Divine Worship on Feb. 24, 1967, which mitigated some of the restrictions mentioned by our reader and of which the elderly priest is apparently unaware.

According to the aforementioned declaration, maintaining the tradition that the Gregorian Mass is a series of 30 consecutive celebrations, it is not required that the same priest celebrate all the Masses nor that they be celebrated on the same altar. Thus, if a priest who has accepted the obligation of celebrating the series finds himself impeded on any particular day, he may request another priest to take the intention for him.

Likewise, it could happen that the priest cannot find a substitute and the series is interrupted because of an unforeseen impediment (for example, an illness), or for a reasonable cause (the celebration of a funeral or a wedding). In this case the Church has disposed that the fruits of suffrage (which, until that moment, Church practice and the piety of the faithful have attributed to this series) are maintained. The priest retains the obligation to complete the 30 Masses as soon as possible but need not begin the series anew.

I do not believe that this pious custom induces superstition or reflects a magical concept. It presumes that the soul is in purgatory and thus recognizes the reality that few people are immediately ready for heaven after death. It is also an act of faith and confidence in the infinite intercessory power of the Mass with respect to souls undergoing purgation. As such, the request for such a series of Masses is a spiritual act of mercy akin to obtaining plenary indulgences on behalf of the deceased.

The Just Judge is also infinitely merciful and can be as generous to those who have toiled but an hour as he is toward those who

bore the brunt of labour all day long.

**Q.** *I read the gospels a lot and from time to time something that I never thought of before occurs to me. Yesterday I came across the phrase which Jesus said to his disciples when he was sending them out to preach. He said "if people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony to them." (Lk 9:5). What does 'shake the dust off your feet' mean?*

**A.** This instruction sounds very strange to us but not to the Jewish listeners of Jesus' time. Remember his disciples were all Jews. For them the dust or soil of any land other than the Holy Land was reckoned unclean. Should they try to reason to pass through any other land (any non Jewish land), they would shake the dust off their feet before returning to their own land lest they defile it. The soil of any non Jewish country was to them ceremonially impure. In the passage which you quote, he is telling them that the same contamination, the same uncleanness is to be applied to those who will not listen to the message they preached, the message of the Good News. □

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### ***I am but a prayer away***

**T**his is God. Today, as with every day, I will be handling all your problems. Please remember that I do not need your help. You must surrender the problem to me for proper resolution. If a situation that you think you can't handle arises, please consult me in prayer. It will be answered in my time, not yours. Please be patient. Together we will come up with the proper resolution. If you do not receive what you anticipate as a proper response from Me, remember...some of God's greatest gifts are unanswered prayers.

*Because I do not sleep, there is no need for you to lose any sleep. Rest My Child...when you need me, I am but a prayer away.*

# Witnesses in & for Our Times



## **BL. ANTHONY ROSMINI (JULY 1) Priest and Philosopher (1797 - 1855) 'APPROACHING GOD THROUGH FAITH AND REASON'**

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

**T**hat was the famous beginning of the 1998 Encyclical of Pope John Paul II whose title read: *Fides et Ratio*. The Pope wrote: "*Faith and reason are like two wings with which the human spirit rises toward contemplating the truth. It is God who has placed in the heart of man the desire to know the truth...and finally to know him...*"

Anthony Rosmini prominently stood out in this secular debate.

He was certainly one of the most eminent and significant figures of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Italy. He was a great cultural giant: not only was he a philosopher but also a pedagogue, jurist and a political scientist. He even worked with people like Cavour, Garibaldi and Mazzini for the *Risorgimento* and for the reunification of Italy.

But Rosmini was not only a man of great culture but he was a saint in his way of thinking and acting, in his life and in his death. It was for these reasons that the Church recognized his sanctity and Cardinal José Martins said on that occasion: "His sanctity will

certainly recover the great bond between reason and faith, between ethical religious behaviour and the public service of Christians... Rosmini lived the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity these were intertwined in dialogue with his great trust in Providence."

It is true that time heals all things, even if it seems too long. He was, in fact, beatified on November 18<sup>th</sup> 2007, exactly 175 years from that date in November 1832 when he started writing his most famous, and discussed (and condemned) book entitled: *The Five Wounds of the Holy Church*. The book was so prophetic that it was immediately misunderstood.

### **His Mission: The apostle of Intellectual Charity**

Anthony Rosmini Serbati was born at Rovereto on March 27<sup>th</sup> 1797 into a rich family and destined to live a very comfortable life. He was very brilliant and convinced very early in life that the man's true greatness lay in

God and that man should strive with all his might to know God, and devote all his energy to the glory of God and the salvation of one's neighbour. **He resolved to make his entire life an ascetical exercise with the sole objective of constantly purifying his soul of every evil and striving to acquire everything that is good and for the love of God and of others. To achieve this he directed all his intellectual activity: to rationally enlighten and instruct Christians.**

He became a priest in 1821 and just two years later it was the same Pius VII who encouraged him to study philosophy, for which he had an extraordinary ability and inclination. A short time later his successor Pius VIII almost gave him an official mission: that of "intellectual charity." What did that mean? Rosmini, according to the Pope, should keep on studying and writing with the sole aim of "leading people to the Faith through reason." He really took this mission very seriously and submitted himself to the will of the Bishop of Rome, and we may say that he carried out this 'mission' up to the end of his life. The works that followed, as a fruit of his commitment, received enthusiastic approval and were admired by other luminaries of his time like Galluppi, Tommaseo, Manzoni and Gioberti.

### **Don Bosco's Great friend and Benefactor**

Rosmini was not just a great luminary and the author of scholarly volumes of philosophy, he also founded religious orders such as the Institute of Charity



(1828) which was a new religious family that was greatly admired. In 1832, he subsequently founded the Sisters of Providence. These two religious families busied themselves in what came to be known as "intellectual charity" and they flourished.

He not only occupied himself with study and writing but he also cultivated friendships. Very important among these was his friendship with Manzoni and Don Bosco. Rosmini and Don Bosco did not just know each other. They admired each other immensely. In fact, there was a brief yet sincere affection that they cherished for each other.

He came to Turin - Valdocco to visit Don Bosco and the latter reciprocated this visit by paying him a visit at Stresa (1847 and 1850) where Rosmini preferred to stay. Both worked for "the glory of God" one mainly through the profound study of philosophy and

politics while the other was given to work for the poor of Turin in the 1800's that was just getting into the Industrial Revolution. They both traversed different paths, used different methodologies but they had just one objective. Both "construction" Italy by helping Italian society to regenerate itself, intellectually, professionally and socially.

Rosmini and the Rosminians were generous with Don Bosco: without their help the Salesian work at Valdocco would have developed very differently and probably very slowly. For example: the first printing press that Don Bosco intended to start, and which functions even today, was put up with the direct assistance of Rosmini.

From 1841 however, Rosmini began to run into difficulties. These came in the form of very bitter criticism that his works faced. Don Bosco came to his defence when he came to know that his friend was facing much opposition. When Don Bosco had to reprint *The History of Italy*, someone suggested that he correct the flattering comments that he had made about Rosmini. Don Bosco refused to do this out of

respect for his good friend. He always held his friend in high regard and he wrote: The good he did for me by his donations served only to edify both me and my boys."

Such was the respect that Rosmini enjoyed that Pius IX (also Blessed) wanted to appoint him Cardinal, Secretary of State. He did nothing. In fact, his troubles began immediately after that with the condemnation of his famous writing *Of the Five Wounds of the Holy Church*. The work was not understood because he was a prophet who looked far into the future. Some of his intuitions were rediscovered and reasserted at the time of Vatican II, more than a hundred years later.

Rosmini did not assert his innocence but submitted himself to the Church of his day (obviously less intelligent than himself) and he withdrew to Stresa. There he entirely devoted himself to study, prayer and the guidance of his religious families. To Manzoni, who assisted him on his death bed, he gave, as some kind of a spiritual testament the following advice: "adore, keep silent, rejoice." His life was a total surrender to the designs of Divine Providence. He died on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1855. □

### ***Don Bosco on His Friend Rosmini***

*In 1847 Don Bosco wrote to a Rosminian priest the following letter...*

*"As regards our excellent Father Rosmini himself, it seemed as though the ban would tarnish his reputation, but this was not so. His books showed him to be a learned philosopher, but by his submission to the Holy See he also revealed himself a truly Catholic philosopher. He showed himself a man of conviction, and proved that the respect which he professed all along for the chair of Peter was genuine, not merely a show. This cannot be said of other distinguished persons who were once in the public eye. For my part, I have always had and still have the sincerest and deepest respect for the Institute of Charity and its most revered founder." (this was what Don Bosco wrote to a Rosminian priest in 1849 a few months after the Holy See condemned two of his works.) (EBM 3, 372)*



# IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

## Bedtime Suggestion

I'd had a pretty hectic day with my four-year-old. When bed-time finally came, I laid down the law: "We're putting on your pjs, brushing your teeth, and reading ONE book. Then it's lights out!"

Her arms went around my neck in a gentle embrace, and she said, "We learned in Sunday school about little boys and girls who don't have mommies and daddies."

Even after I'd been such a grouch, I thought, she was still grateful to have me. I felt tears begin to well up in my eyes, and then she whispered, "Maybe you could go be THEIR mom?"

## Chute Error

While being transported to basic training as a new enlistee of the Air Force Academy, I accidentally opened a parachute in the rear of the C-47. The plane was piloted by a major and a captain, and I felt intimidated as I opened the cockpit door to confess what I had done.

Expecting to be severely chastised, I was surprised by the captain's calm response. "Well, son," he said, "if this plane goes down, that chute is yours."

## Biggest Lie

Two boys were arguing when the teacher entered the room. The teacher says, "Why are you arguing?"

One boy answers, "We found a ten dollar bill and decided to give it to whoever tells the biggest lie."

"You should be ashamed of yourselves," said the teacher, "When I was your age I didn't

even know what a lie was."

The boys gave the ten dollars to the teacher.

## Anesthesiologist Bill

Margie received a bill from the hospital for her recent surgery, and was astonished to see a \$900 fee for the anesthesiologist.

She called his office to demand an explanation. "Is this some kind of mistake?" Margie asked when she got the doctor on the phone.

"No, not at all," the doctor said calmly. "Well," said Margie, "that's awfully costly for knocking someone out."

"Not at all," replied the doctor. "I knock you out for free. The 900 dollars is for bringing you back around."

## Coffee Vending Machine

A man put his fifty cents in a vending machine and watched helplessly while the cup failed to appear and a nozzle sent coffee down the drain while another poured cream after it.

"Now that's automation!" he exclaimed. "It even drinks for you!"

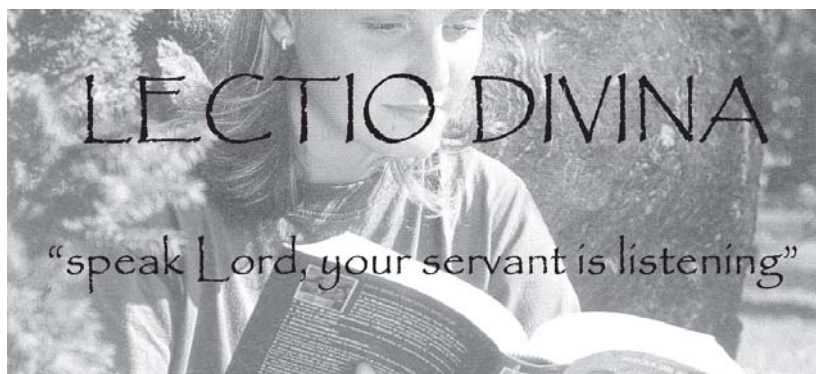
## Doctor in the House

A strained voice called out through the darkened theatre, "Please, is there a doctor in the house?!"

Several men stood up as the lights came on.

An older lady pulled her daughter to stand next to her, "Good, are any of you doctors single and interested in a date with a nice girl?" □





## Pray for us 'NOW!'

by Roberta Fora

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

**I**n reflecting on the concluding words of the “Hail Mary” my attention is drawn to the word “now” and my mind suddenly allows several reflections to surface.

The present moment, that instant, which for no reason at all, we try to run away from: this is what “now” means.

What can be done now, must not be put off for later.

My primary school teacher often gave us this quote: “do not put off for tomorrow what can be done today.”

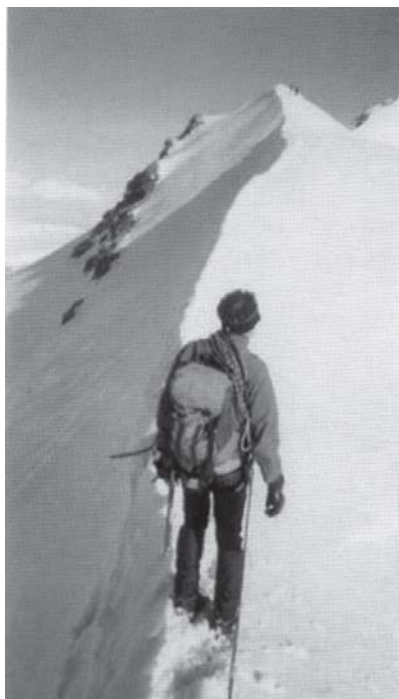
It is true, that at times, we do not realize how irreplaceable and invaluable this moment is.

If for any reason we decide not to give our best in any given circumstance; that fact could have disastrous consequences.

On the other hand instead, through our constant effort, despite everything else, we do not



allow a single moment to slip by without doing something concrete for others; without putting off for later what could be done now; we realize its importance because we have succeeded in achieving



something positive both for ourselves and certainly for those around us.

Mary is a great example, an essential point of reference for Christians, because every moment of her life was lived "to the full," without ever postponing what she could do at that precise moment.

Let us consider the angel's announcement to Mary. She did not hesitate but she eagerly responded to the voice of God who mysteriously spoke to her humble heart.

Another useful example is the incident of the wedding feast at Cana. There Mary understood that she had to act immediately. She promptly went to Jesus without hesitation to ask for the miracle because there was no wine for the

guests. After that the wedding could go on serenely.

In short, if we choose Mary as a model on our Christian journey, we would do nothing else but learn to live the present moment profoundly committed to doing the maximum.

*Following Mary's  
example we learn  
to live the "now"  
of our days  
without useless  
compromises.*

Help us, Lord, not to squander for any reason the time you give us each day.

Following Mary's example we learn to live the "now" of our day without useless compromises but with the assurance that every good deed done for others is done with conviction as a visible sign of God's love in the world, because we are his humble instruments. □



**F**or most Christians, attendance at the Eucharist on Sunday is the centre of their religious observance. It is there that they encounter God, and return again and again to be nourished and sustained by the Lord of Life. Since it is such an important part of our faith, 'it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions,' as the Second Vatican Council says.

The Eucharist began at a meal, and an essential part of the Mass is the sharing of food. We need food to sustain our life, but food shared together also expresses our mutual love and dependence. We have a hunger for sustenance and for companionship, and food shared helps us to satisfy both.

### **A Busy Day**

The following is a true story that happened many years ago. It was a busy time on the Murphys' farm. Josephine, who was at home from boarding-school on holidays, was helping her brother Jim to plant potatoes. They had made an early start, since there was a lot of work to do. They were disappointed that their neighbour Mick had let them down. He had promised to help them, but had failed to turn up.

After a few hours, their backs were beginning to ache. They both breathed a sigh of relief when their mother called them to their meal. As they ate, they talked about their morning's work, and their disappointment at Mick's absence. Mrs. Murphy felt sure that there was a good reason for it.

### **An Errand of Mercy**

A few minutes later, Mick stood before them in the kitchen. He apologized for being late, but explained that he had been on an errand of mercy. He had cycled to the village, about six miles away, to buy some bread and provisions for Katie, a needy neighbour. Josephine at once offered to bring the food to Katie, and after a good meal Mick and Jim set off to continue the day's work.

Josephine and her mother were very impressed with Mick's good deed. They berated themselves for



# Spaces

## HEAD AND LIFE

Cornyn

their own thoughtlessness in not coming to Katie's aid themselves. However, it was not too late to put matters right.

Recently, the Murphys had received a parcel from America, containing an abundance of exciting gifts. Here was a chance to share their good fortune with the penniless Katie. They made a parcel of tea, biscuits, a cake and a pot of jam, and Josephine set out on her bicycle to bring them to her, along with Mick's provisions.

### An Answer to Prayer

When she arrived, Josephine knocked on the door, but there was no reply. She went around to the back of the house, and found the door ajar. She crept quietly into the dark house. Katie's bedroom door was open, and Josephine could see that she was on her knees, praying before an image of the Sacred Heart lit by a small lamp.

After a few minutes, Katie noticed Josephine, and apologized for keeping her waiting. She explained that she was just finishing a novena to the Sacred Heart, to whom she had a special devotion. She had not eaten for several days, she confided. Josephine gave her the parcel of food, and Katie's face lit up immediately. It was indeed an answer to prayer. Katie invited her to stay, and they both sat down to a simple meal together, a meal neither of them would ever forget.

### To Be For Others

This story reminds us of the importance of food for us. Food relieves our hunger, and it brings us close to each other. Jesus became food and sustenance for his followers even before he died, for he gave them the nourishment they craved, and made them one in love.

In his death and resurrection, Jesus became the Bread of Life for all of his followers throughout the ages. In the Eucharist, Jesus is the Bread of Life for each one of us. 'To be nourished by Jesus as the Bread of Life,' says the theologian Monika K. Hellwig, 'means to come to share in his life, and his life is to be for others in the most concrete way.' □



# Family Secrets

Helen Morgan

## The Story So Far:

*Sarah Williams, aged twenty-six, loses her parents in a car crash just as she was about to marry her fiancé Jonathan. Originally Irish, Tom and Bridie had always told her that they had no living relatives. Dr. Jim Brennan, an old friend from their past, arrives for the funeral and through him, Sarah hears about her Irish relatives for the first time. Later; while visiting her mother's sister Nuala in Killpatrick, she is shown a photograph of her maternal grandmother whom she is supposed to resemble but she looks nothing like her: While visiting her Aunt Kate, she hears about baby Catherine, her mother's first baby who died shortly after birth following which her mother had a hysterectomy. Realizing she is adopted, she breaks off her engagement to Jonathan. Later; while looking for her adoption papers, she finds a sealed box in the attic which contains baby clothes and a newspaper photo. With her cousin Kevin's help she discovers that the baby in the*

*photo was abducted many years before in Liverpool. Kevin believes she is that child. Together they travel to Liverpool to search for relatives but find only one: the child's grandmother who is in an old people's home suffering from Alzheimer's.*



As soon as she saw the old lady seated at the table, Sarah knew beyond a shadow of doubt that she was Jane Braebourne, the abducted child. Through the long tunnel of time, her mother's words reached her: You are the image of your maternal grandmother: She was small like you are and very pretty.

Looking at Mrs. Fleming was like looking at herself in fifty years time. She had the same build, the same shaped face, the same colouring and the same hazel eyes. Bridie must have seen a newspaper photo of her grandmother, she realized.

Sarah felt strange and



disconnected standing in that shabby room, the grandmother she had never known seated in front of her. She realized for the first time that she had never really known the people who had brought her up and whom she had called her parents. There was a side to them now that she never in her wildest dreams could have imagined.

Anger shot through her as she finally acknowledged what they had done. How could she ever forgive them, she asked herself? And they clearly had no intention of ever telling her the truth, allowing her to marry Jonathan without saying a word.

Sarah looked at the frail old lady in front of her and thought of the suffering she must have endured when baby Jane was taken. And what must her real parents have gone through? There was no justification whatsoever for stealing another woman's child, no matter what the circumstances. To think that Tom and Bridie could have committed such a wicked crime horrified her.

How could they have lived so happily together with the guilt that must have weighed heavily upon them, she asked herself.

Now she was faced with what to say to the old lady. And what if her illness had progressed too far for her ever to understand what she was about to tell her? Before she had time to say anything, an elderly grey-haired woman suddenly spotted Sarah across the room. She leaned across the table and spoke to her grandmother.

'Here's Joanne with your clean laundry, Mavis.'

'Joanne? Who's Joanne?' the old

lady asked confused.

'Now you know very well who Joanne is. She brings you your clean laundry every week,' she replied firmly.

She must have confused me with someone else, thought Sarah.

'This is not one of her better days dear,' the old lady told Sarah as she stood up slowly from the table and shuffled out of the room.

'Who are you?' asked Mrs. Fleming, eyeing Sarah suspiciously as she sat down beside her.

'Gran,' she said, the words strange on her lips, 'I am Jane, your granddaughter.'

For a brief moment she saw a flicker of recognition in the old lady's eyes, then there was a long silence. As though it was an afterthought, the old lady suddenly spoke.

'Jane? You're not Jane!' she said, a look of irritation on her face. 'Why are you telling me you are Jane?' she demanded. 'That evil woman took Jane away. She broke my Cathy's heart.'

Her words fell like bombs on Sarah's fractured life, shattering any illusions she still harboured about Tom and Bridie.

'Gran, I am Jane, your granddaughter,' she repeated gently. 'I have come back to find my family.' The old lady's face crumpled as though the message had finally sunk in and she began to cry softly.

'Is it really you Jane?' she asked timidly, looking at Sarah with tears in her eyes.

'Yes Gran,' she replied, a lump in her throat.

Sitting close to her Grandmother, Sarah noticed a deep sadness in the old lady's



eyes as though she had been crying inside for many years. She moved across to comfort her but in an instant, the old lady's demeanor changed.

'Who are you? Why are you here?' she asked, having no recollection of what had happened a few seconds before. Her thoughts had returned to the world she now inhabited more and more, as the Alzheimer's tried to claim what remained of her fragile mind.

Sarah knew there was no point in remaining there any longer. She had all the proof she needed. The

hospital would have a record of her grandmother's next-of-kin. Perhaps there were other relatives out there somewhere. According to Jeannie Smith her mother was dead and her father had walked out on the family years ago. There was no mention of siblings.

Overcome with emotion, Sarah pushed open the day room door and immediately collided with a girl who was coming through from the other side.

'I am so sorry,' she said raising her eyes to apologize but when she saw the girl in front of her, she froze on the spot...*(To be continued)*

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## 7. UNEARTHING HIDDEN TALENT

**(Continued from pg. 7)**

In the face of such a magnanimous gift, how can one be calculating and miserly?

Eucharist is for living and not for mere celebration only! Every Eucharist meaningfully celebrated must include a certain amount of genuine self-giving. Of course, this self-giving can be done even within the family – but somehow seeing what the Lord does for us, we realize that we cannot stop there; we need to cross barriers, most of which are erected by ourselves only, because of our fears and doubts. Eucharistic faith overcomes all such obstacles and sends us out energetically: 'Go (your celebration has ended) now to love and serve the Lord in his needy brethren, for as long as you did it to one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it to me.'

As we look back on some of the daring steps we have taken in our

lives when we did reach out to those in need, we would be surprised to realize that these were taken almost 'on the hop' as it were, without too much of conscious deliberation. It was the Spirit moving within us who would have goaded us onto action – and for some reason, we were recklessly open to his promptings. If only we would be open and vulnerable in that fashion more often in our lives! But the wonderful part of this process is that once we do risk giving of ourselves spontaneously to the action of God's Spirit, we find ourselves carried along the way, from one generous act of self-giving to another before we realize what is happening. We are then well on the way to fulfilling what Jesus has commanded: 'Do this as a memorial of Me... freely have you received, freely give...' □

# *Don Bosco: The Times, The Man, The Facts*

## **SMILING DON BOSCO**

by Natale Cerrato (T/A:ID)

A "bestseller" of the anecdotal history of the Saint of Youngsters was *The Smiling Don Bosco* first published in Italian in 1938 by St. Paul Publications. It has reached its 29<sup>th</sup> edition in 2001. The book was written by Fr. Louis G. Chiavarino who lived for several years with Don Bosco and was even privileged to witness his holy death. This book comes from the pen of an author who knew the saint very well and therefore whose authenticity is not in doubt. However, he treats about the humorous facts in the life of Don Bosco so that we may better know him.

Taking our cue from the title of this wonderful book we might wonder: Did Don Bosco really laugh? When and how did he laugh? The *Biographical Memoirs* attest that, from the time he was a boy, Don Bosco possessed a rather serious character. He spoke little, observed a lot and weighed people's words carefully. If he heard ridiculous things or words that were mispronounced he never laughed immodestly (cf. MB 17).

One day young Charles Tomatis, his clothes in unseemly disarray, joined a group of companions with whom Don Bosco was talking. The others began to laugh at this bizarre appearance, but Don Bosco's face was impassive. When he was asked, in this and similar



circumstances, how he could restrain his mirth, he usually replied, "I laugh when I want to, and when I don't want to, I don't laugh." (EBM 3, 416)

So, in general his laugh was seen but never heard (EBM 4, 265). He always recommended moderation in laughing. "Laugh and joke by all means," he told them, "but with restraint, and not too noisily." (EBM 10, 275)

### **Don Bosco Weeps**

Weeping: he never succeeded in controlling himself or hiding it. Even as a youngster he seemed to be a timid and tender boy, with a tendency to cry easily. He was a saint of joy, but there is evidence that he was given to tears not only frequently as a "characteristic of his very sensitive personality", but also, in certain cases because

of something more mysterious.

From the time he was young he loved looking for nests. He climbed trees with the adroitness of a cat. John was about ten when he caught a beautiful blackbird and put it in a cage. He taught it to sing by whistling notes into its ear for hours on end. The bird was his all. But alas, one day, after returning home from school, he ran immediately to play with his blackbird. To his great shock he found the cage besplattered with blood, and the poor bird lying there in shreds and half-devoured. A cat had seized it by the tail and in the attempt to drag it out of the cage, had pulled it apart and killed it. John burst into tears at the gruesome sight and was inconsolable for several days. At last he began to reflect on the cause of his sadness. Thereupon, he made a resolution amazingly never again to attach his heart to the things of this

world. (cf. EBM 1, 90-91)

Nature had endowed him with a tender heart and it revealed itself on other serious and grave occasions. In November of 1830, when his benefactor Fr. John Calosso suddenly died, he wept unceasingly for his dead benefactor. Awake, he thought of him; asleep, he dreamed of him. John's grief became so intense that Margaret, fearing for his health, sent him to Capriglio to spend some time with his grandfather. (cf. EBM 1,163)

June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1841 was the day of his first Mass at his home town. It was the feast of *Corpus Christi*. The *Memoirs of the Oratory* records it as follows:

"I went home that evening to be with my family. As I drew near the house and saw the place of the dream I had when I was about nine, I could not hold back the tears. I said: *"How wonderful are the*



*ways of Divine Providence! God has truly raised a poor child from the earth to place him amongst the princes of his people.” (MO 167)*

The day after the consecration of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Rome, Monday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1887, Don Bosco chose to go down to the church to say Mass at the altar of Mary Help of Christians. No less than fifteen times after he had started the Holy Sacrifice Don Bosco had to stop, overcome by powerful emotion, which caused him to shed tears. As he was leaving the altar, he burst into tears, covering his face with both hands. “I bless...I bless” He was unable to finish the sentence. Fr. Viglietti had to take him gently by the arm and lead him away. When he regained his calm Fr. Viglietti asked him what had happened and he was told. “There appeared before my eyes the scene when at the age of ten I dreamt about the congregation... At that time Our Lady had said: ‘In due time you will understand everything.’ Since that day, sixty two years of hardships, sacrifices and struggles have passed by. All of a sudden, like an unexpected flash of lightning everything had been revealed to him in the building of the Church of the Sacred Heart!” (cf. EBM 18,341)

Even greater was Don Bosco’s emotion when the first Missionaries were leaving for faraway Latin America.

The same thing happened when those of his sons came to Valdocco to visit him and they were leaving. This was especially noted when during his last illness.

Fr. Paul Albera, the Provincial of the French houses, also had a last conversation with Don Bosco that was filled with emotion. When he went to say good-bye, Don Bosco looked at him with much affection and said: *You too are about to leave. They are all leaving me. I know that Fr. John Bonetti will be leaving tonight...*

He had tears in his eyes when he spoke: *“I am not reproaching you. You are only doing your duty by going away. God be with you. I shall pray for you and bless you with all my heart!” (EBM 18,337)*

### **The Gift of Tears**

“Besides this natural tenderness, Don Bosco also had the spiritual “gift of tears”, about which we read in other saints. (cf. Peter Brocardo, *Don Bosco Deeply Human, Deeply Holy*, p. 44-45)

Fr. Cagliero whose testimony enjoys great credibility said: “When Don Bosco was preaching on the love of God, on the loss of souls, on the passion of Jesus Christ on Good Friday, on the Most Holy Eucharist, on happy death and on the hope of heaven, my companions and I saw him shedding tears several times, sometimes out of love, sometimes out of pain, and at other times out of joy. Regarding this gift it would be no mistake to define this as a mystical phenomenon.

“It was through those tears that one saw his rapport with God...a zeal for the salvation of youngsters using every strategy and pastoral technique” (Peter Brocardo).

Don Bosco’s holiness was fervent, something far greater than just a frigid pedagogical system. □

## NEWSBITS

### VATICAN CITY

In a world of unbridled consumerism and materialism, Christians can find inspiration in the Buddhist witness of happiness in non-attachment to material goods, said the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

In a message for the feast of Vesak, a commemoration of the major events in the life of the Buddha, the Vatican office urged Christians and Buddhists to work together to contribute to the well-being of the world community.

The message, signed by the council's president, **Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran**, and secretary **Pier Luigi Celata**, said Christian and Buddhist communities are aware of the challenges of "the ever more extensive phenomenon of poverty in its various forms" and "the unbridled pursuit of material possessions and the pervasive shadow of consumerism."

While very different, there are two types of poverty, the message said.

One is a poverty that can be chosen in the form of emptying oneself in order to listen to and be more open to God and other people, the message said.

The other kind of poverty is a material deprivation that "prevents people and families from living as befits their dignity," it said.

God does not wish for this latter form of poverty, which also offends justice and equality and threatens peaceful co-existence, it said.

The Catholic community wishes to thank its Buddhist friends, "for your inspiring witness of non-attachment and contentment", said

the message.

Buddhist monks, nuns and lay faithful freely embrace a poverty "that spiritually nourishes the human heart, substantially enriching life with a deeper insight into the meaning of existence, and sustaining commitment to promoting the good will of the whole human community," it said.

CNS

### ROME

Pope Pius XII told senior bishops during World War II that, should he be arrested, his resignation would become effective immediately and the bishops should flee to a friendly country to re-establish Church leadership and appoint a new pope.

The bishops would be expected to flee to a safe country, probably neutral Portugal, documents in the Vatican's Secret Archives show, the U.K. Telegraph reports.

"Pius XII said 'if they want to arrest me they will have to drag me from the Vatican,'" said Peter Gumpel, the German Jesuit priest who is in charge of researching whether Pius XII should be made a saint, and therefore has access to secret Vatican archives.

Pius XII told his advisers "the person who would leave under these conditions would not be Pius XII but Eugenio Pacelli" - his name before he was elected Pontiff - thus giving permission for a new pope to be elected.

"Pius XII wouldn't leave voluntarily. He had been invited repeatedly to go to Portugal or Spain or the United States but he felt he could





Pius XII writes one of his wartime Christmas radio messages using a typewriter at the Vatican in this undated photograph. Last November the Vatican opened a major exhibit on the life and pontificate of Pope Pius XII, highlighting the late Pope's actions on behalf of Jews and others who suffered during World War II

not leave his diocese under these severe and tragic circumstances," Father Gumpel said.

Vatican documents, which still remain secret, are believed to show that Pius XII was aware of a plan formulated by Hitler in July 1943 to occupy the Vatican and arrest him and his senior cardinals.

On September 6, 1943, days after Italy signed the Sept 3<sup>rd</sup> armistice with the Allies and German troops occupied Rome, Pius XII told key aides that he believed his arrest was imminent.

General Karl Otto Wolff, an SS General, was told to "occupy as soon as possible the Vatican, secure the archives and art treasures and transfer the pope, together with the Curia, so that they cannot fall into the hands of the Allies and exert a political influence.

Some historians have claimed that General Wolff tipped off the Vatican that he also managed to talk to the Fuhrer out of the plot because he believed it would alienate Catholics worldwide. *CATHNEWS*



## PHILADELPHIA

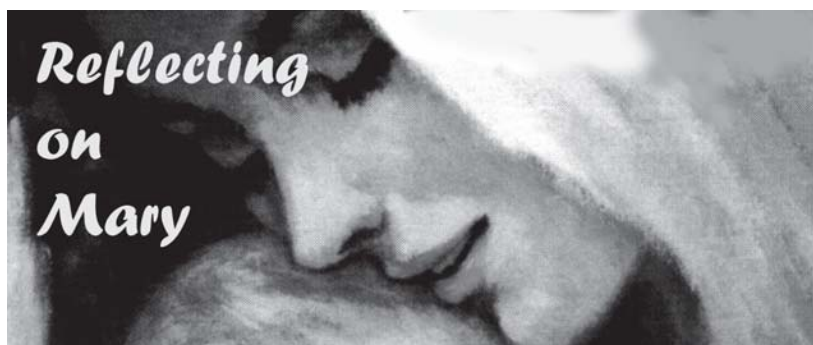
You wouldn't expect to see a Philadelphia nun who works with the homeless on a list of the 100 most influential people in the world.

Mercy **Sister Mary Scullion**, co-founder and executive director of Project HOME, has been named a finalist in Time Magazine's 2009 annual most influential list, which calls her "Philadelphia's Mother Teresa".

As of mid-afternoon April 6, she was ranked 37<sup>th</sup> among 204 nominees in continuing online voting, right behind the Dalai Lama. The list includes people in government, science, technology and the arts.

She has helped slash the homeless rate in half in the City of Brotherly Love, and 95 percent of those who cycle through Project HOME are never again homeless, "a success rate which has made the programme a model for dozens of other US cities." *CNS* ■





## **THE MAGNIFICAT: MARY'S IDEA OF GOD**

*Roman Ginn, OCSO*

**W**hen St. Luke described Mary's visit to her aged, pregnant relative Elizabeth in the first chapter of his gospel, he hardly primarily intended to present her as a model of fraternal charity because he sent her back to Nazareth just at the time when Elizabeth needed her most for the birth of St. John. Luke's principal concern here is to set up a contrast between Jesus and John the Baptist that will clarify the role of each in the story that follows: Jesus is the promised Savior, John is his precursor. Both mothers-to-be are brought together for the same end and the two canticles-Magnificat and Benedictus-with their praises of God for his action in the lives of each, serve the same purpose.

Standing at the beginning of Luke's narrative of the coming of Christ and the foundation of the Church, the Magnificat expresses more than Mary's thoughts and feelings about the stupendous event that had taken place when

the angel Gabriel appeared to her. It tells us what the early Church thought and felt about the salvation that came to the world in Mary's womb. It is an implicit invitation to Christians to a greater awareness of the grace they have received and to bear witness to it by praising the merciful Lord.

The Magnificat does not directly address God or anyone else. It simply describes God as he has manifested himself in Israel. It thus presents a phenomenology (or birds-eye view) of God, an image of the God of the Old Testament as received in the New. This God is intensely personal and active.

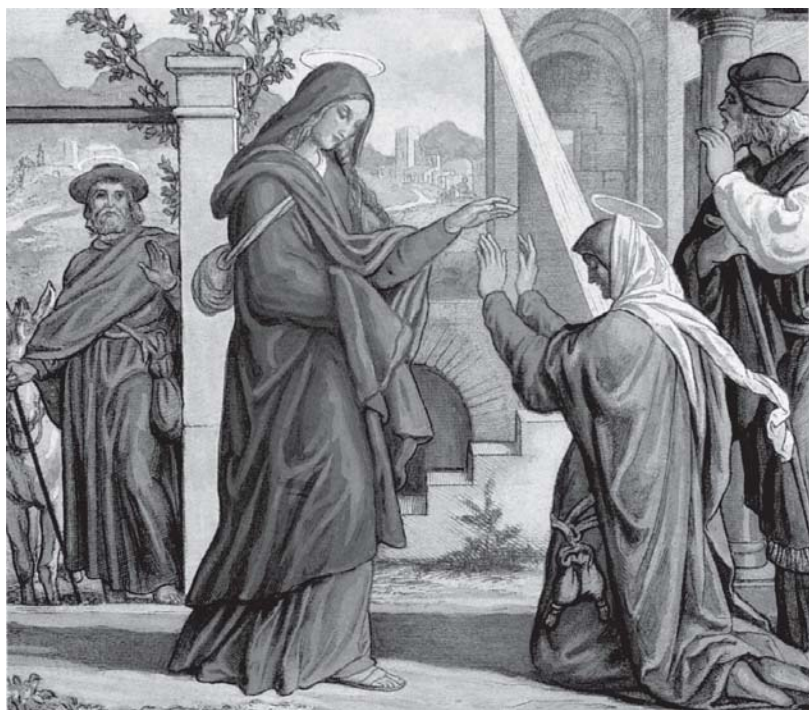
He has a proper name, Yahweh. He is lord and protagonist of history, which he knows, plans and brings about. He is never disinterested or neutral in regard to his world, but has special care for the weak, the

poor and the oppressed. And since man is created in his image and likeness, the authors of the Old Testament felt justified in presenting God with human traits: he is a father, shepherd, defender, he wakes up, draws near, comes down, sits down; he has a face, eyes, hands, mouth, ears; he experiences anger, love, envy... Although these human ideas about God are necessary, they are also dangerous. They can be abused. For this reason the Israelites were careful to correct them by emphasizing God's sanctity, his transcendence of space and time and of all the fantasies of human imagination and intelligence. The similarity between this image of God and that found in the beatitudes (Lk 6,20-26; Mt 5,3-12), in the jubilation hymn (Lk 10,21;

Mt 11,25f) and in several of Jesus' parables is easily seen.

Mary's canticle has been happily compared to an aria in opera, an extended, self-contained vocal solo that the composer inserts during a pause in the action in order to intensify the emotion and deepen the meaning of a dramatic situation. This little poem does this very well. It responds to Elizabeth's praise of Mary with Mary's praise of God. She wants to reflect God, not draw attention to herself. The God she reflects is certainly the God of the Old and New Testaments.

This idea of God was meaningful for the people of her



time and place. He is the merciful God who extends his salvation not only to his lowly handmaid but to all those who fear him. As the gospel that follows shows, especially in Chapter 15, this mercy reaches above all those far from him but prepared to return repenting. He is likewise the God of Israel to whom he has made promises that will be kept. Nevertheless he wills that not only the posterity of Abraham, but all humanity, regardless of their ethnic origin, benefit from his salvation. Finally he is the God who is not indifferent to concrete living conditions. He will make those who oppress the poor and weak taste the strength of his arm. The honor of his holy name demands this.

As can be seen, the Magnificat offers no definition of God. It only describes different aspects of his nature drawn from his intervention into Mary's life. In doing so it offers a synthesis of the biblical idea of God: his knowledge, mercy, justice, holiness, providence, power and fidelity. All of these attributes or aspects of God were revealed most clearly in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Only Jesus could answer Philip's naive question: 'Lord, let us see the Father; that is all we ask' with such startling words: 'Whoever has seen me, has seen the Father.' (Jn 14,8-10)

Jesus appears in the gospels as a splendid revelation of the wisdom, power, sanctity, justice and fidelity of God but above all of his merciful love. His love is redemptive. He came into the world not to call the just, but sinners, which means all of us. Jesus is by definition Saviour.

And he did not save us by merely paying off our debts with God's justice, as some wealthy benefactor might do, but entered into solidarity with us. He became one of us in everything except our sins. As St. Paul notes, 'Christ never knew sin, and God made him into sin for us, so that in him we might be turned into the holiness of God.' (2 Cor 5,21)

When he died on the cross, it was not Jesus in his human individuality separated from other men and women that was immolated; it was Jesus in his social dignity as head of sinful humanity, as universal human being, in solidarity with all mankind of all time and place. The same solidarity with Christ risen and glorified has 'raised us up too, enthroned us too above the heavens, in Christ Jesus.' (Ep 2,6) This salvific love of Jesus is only a mirror in which Mary in her song finds joy in the salvific love of God her Saviour.

Throughout the New Testament, both in St. John (e.g., 13,34; 10,17; 1 Jo 4,16) and in St. Paul (especially Rom 5,8) the idea that God is love, loving, the source and object of love who demand love from his creatures is so insistent that it is a good indication that when St. John says 'God is love' he means it in more than a vague metaphorical sense. He means that God is really and metaphysically love. that love is a characteristic of the divine being. It is not only or primarily a theological virtue, but a metaphysical dimension of the divine reality. And this is the God-Love whose goodness and

mercy on his humble handmaid and whose care and justice extends to every human person is praised in the Magnificat.

This is the idea of God that Christians are called to bear witness to today. For in our secularized world many are wondering if this is a valid idea of God. For the philosopher Jean-Paul Satre, the very idea of God negates human freedom. He considered the absence of God from the world as a positive liberation. During the 1950s, the logical positivists were asking if the idea of God had any meaning for it could not be tested empirically. They forgot that like poetry and music, religious statements are not open to scientific verification. The Jewish scholar Hans Jonas thinks that after Auschwitz we can no longer believe in the omnipotence of God. The Protestant theologian Paul Tillich decided that the personal God of the Bible must go. A God who tinkered with the world was ridiculous, while a God who interfered with human freedom and creativity was a tyrant. So we need to find a God above this personal God. Tillich preferred to define God as 'the ground of being' or as man's 'ultimate concern.' In England Don Cupitt, the Dean of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, finds the traditional God unacceptable and proposes a form of Christian Buddhism. Feminists too are repelled by a personal God because he is in the wrong gender. And even the old metaphysical idea of God as Supreme Being is also felt to be unsatisfactory.

Meanwhile some are predicting that at the point where we now stand in history when one worldwide

civilization is replacing the multiple civilizations of the past 10,000 years, the theological religions of the past will be replaced by secular religions {also called ideologies} and our need for God will be filled by mythic heroes such as Hitler and Mao Tse-tung. For people cannot endure emptiness and



desolation. The vacuum will be filled with mythical beings of human making, gods or heroes.

St. John of the Cross once asked a lay brother of his Carmelite monastery, 'What is God?' The brother's answer so delighted the Saint that he frequently repeated the story. The brother's simple but profound words can bring meaning and peace into much of the God-talk of our empirical world. 'God,' said the brother, 'is whatever he wants to be.' This is the God of the Magnificat, of the Bible and of the Church. ▣

**Father Roman Ginn**, is a Cistercian monk who resides in a hermitage at the Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemane, in Trappist, Ky.

**LOVING CHILDREN TO  
THEIR LOVING MOTHER**

My sincere thanks to Jesus and Mother Mary for curing my mother from her illness and for all the other graces received.

*S. Almeida, Thane*

Dear Mother Mary I am grateful that you cured my daughter Lorraine who suffered from a stroke. *Nazara L. D'Souza, Canada*  
Our grateful thanks to Jesus and our Loving Mother Mary for a successful eye operation for our only son and our son-in-law who completed his train driver's exams successfully on the Railways in Australia. Loving Mother continue your merciful blessings on our family.

*Mrs A DeVisser*

I had undergone a heart operation thrice and yet my health was deteriorating. A scan revealed a blood clot that might cause havoc to the brain. Doctors advised another heart operation and it was considered risky. I prayed to Our Lord and Mother Mary Help of Christians for a safe surgery. The fourth operation and the replacement valve was done successfully. I am confident that Mother Mary helped the doctors during the surgery. I am ever grateful to Jesus and Mother Mary.

*Jennifer C.*

Thank you dear Infant Jesus and Mother Mary for helping me overcome the troubles I was going through and for keeping my family in good health.

*Lloyd Daniel Parekh*

My son from New Zealand informed me that he received a clear report on the state of his eyes. Thank you dear Mother Mary for your intercession.

*Brenda Tully, Asansol*

Thank you, dear Mary Help of Christians for a speedy recovery and for all the other favours received.

*Mrs. Gepsina Fernandes, Mumbai*

It was the 4th July, 2007 and I was leaving home to attend a workshop at 8.45 am. I was to ride my two-wheeler to the city. As I was about to mount my bike, my left hand suddenly went stiff. I could not use the bike. As I entered the house a few minutes later, I lost consciousness. I was admitted to hospital and my left side was completely paralyzed and I had convulsions. I gained consciousness around 3.00pm with the paralysis completely gone. As I gained consciousness I felt Mother Mary's presence very strongly near me and she was telling me she did this for a purpose. I am grateful to Mother Mary for saving me and for taking my paralysis away.

*Flora Dias, Goa*

Sincere thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mother Mary for all the favours and blessings bestowed on me and my family till date.

*M.A. Manuel, Poona*



## 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 dearest Mother, for the favours received through the recitation of the 3 Hail Marys.

*Sylvia Lobo, Goa*

Grateful thanks to Our Blessed Mother and St. Dominic Savio for the safe delivery and for the gift of a healthy baby boys Agnello and Nelinho and a grandson to us through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys.

*Voicy & Evaristo, Mumbai*

Thank you, dear Mother Mary, Help of Christians for always being there for me. Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis.

*Aditya Tawde, Mumbai*

My son, who was on an official visit to Mumbai from Perth was returning home around 3 am on March 25th this year. He was traveling home in an auto with his friend. At a junction a dumper came on them with great speed and collided with the auto. The auto was completely damaged and my son was dragged along for some distance, but he escaped miraculously without a scratch, only the cover of his laptop suffered some damage. I am sure he escaped because of his devotion of the 3 Hail Marys.

*Stanley D'Cunha, Mumbai*

Thank you dear Mother Mary and Don Bosco for helping me get a job.

*Lucy Fernandes, Nallasopara*

Thank you dear Mother Mary, Don Bosco and all the saints for saving me from a major operation and for taking care of me in the ICU.

*Mr Brito Gomes, Goa*

After praying the Rosary fervently for a whole year, my aged spinster sister decided to enter a "Home for the Aged". My sincere thanks to Mother Mary.

*V. Pais*

I am sincerely grateful to Mother Mary for all the favours I received through her intercession.

*C. Mendonca, Mumbai*

Thank you, Mother Mary for all the graces and favours received.

*Orson Rodrigues, Goa*



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

Our sincere thanks to dear Mother Mary, Our Heavenly Mother, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for having obtained a blessing. *A. Hiruthayaswamy, Uthagamandalam, the Nilgiris*  
Thank you dear Jesus, Mother Mary and Don Bosco for all the graces and blessings bestowed on me. *Matilda D'Souza, Goa*  
Thank you dear Mary Help of Christians, St. Dominic Savio and St. John Bosco for the numerous favours received .

*Sylvia Anthony, Kerala*

My sincere thanks to you dear Mother Mary and Don Bosco for helping us complete our studies, for helping my brother find a good job and for a successful operation. Thank you also for all the graces showered on us. *Ms. F. D'Souza, Mumbai*

My sincere though belated thanks to dear Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for protecting us from a near fatal accident that could have happened when a kitchen cabinet fell on me. Thank you also for a cure from an ailment.

*Mrs. N. Gracias, Mumbai*

My sincere thanks to Our Lady, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for helping my son clear my examinations.

*Mrs. Sheela Joseph, Mumbai*

Thank you dear Mother Mary and Don Bosco for keeping my daughter Bonita in good health throughout the year 2008-2009.

*Bosco Mascarenhas, Mumbai*

Thank you dear Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for a safe delivery of my elder son 3<sup>1/2</sup> years back and my son a year back.

*Cynthia Sequeira, Dubai*

Many thanks to the Divine Mercy, Mary Help of Christians and Don bosco for a successful operation and for helping my children. *A sincere devotee of Our Lady, IC Colony, Mumbai*

Thank you, dear Mother Mary, Help of Christians and Don Bosco for a successful operation. *A Devotee, Mumbai*

Thank you dear Jesus, Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco for a successful cancer operation without the need for any chemotherapy and for all the other graces received.

*Brenda Fernandes, Mumbai*

Thank you, dear Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for my son's good job. *Marina Fonseca, Mumbai*

My sincere thanks to Jesus, in the Blessed Sacrament, Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco for all the favours and blessings received.

*Mark W. Dodd, Pune*

Thank you sincerely for the 5 successful operations and for granting my son success in his XI Std. examinations. Keep us always in your care. *Argentina A. Fernandes, Mumbai*

## THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



My daughter's blood pressure had risen in the eighth month of my pregnancy. Then within 24 hours the capillaries ruptured in the womb owing to the blood pressure. This coupled with hormonal changes due to pregnancy led to a life threatening medical condition. Only a miracle from St. Dominic Savio caused the operation to be successful. Even though the baby was on life-support systems for five days she soon recovered and both baby and mother are safe. Sincere thanks to the powerful intercession of

dear St. Dominic Savio. *Mrs. Hazel Quazi, Bhusawal, Jalgaon*

My sincere thanks to St. Dominic Savio for curing my husband from jaundice and for many other favours received.

*Mrs. A.C. Varghese, Kerala*

Thanks to you dear Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for helping my daughter pass in her SSC examinations and all the favours received.

*Mrs. Fernande and Fly, Goa*

Thank you Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for giving me a healthy baby boy and for numerous other blessings.

*Sonia Nettar, Trivandrum, Kerala*

Thank you St. Dominic Savio for the favours that my family and I received especially for the gift of twins that are due in the month of August. I pray that St. Dominic Savio stay with me throughout this period of waiting.

*Maria Renaux, Chennai*

Thank you dear Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the many favours received. *Vijay Aranha, Mangalore*

### APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

JULY 2009

**Holy Father's General Intention:** *That the Christians of the Middle East may live their faith in full freedom and be an instrument of peace and reconciliation.*

**Holy Father's Missionary Intention:** *That the Church may be the seed and nucleus of a humanity reconciled and reunited in God's one and only family, thanks to the testimony of all the faithful in every country in the world.*

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## MARY WAS THERE

On the 23rd March '09 at 01:30 am, my son who had just finished his Rosary, heard a terrible bang, as if a wooden cupboard had fallen. He rushed into the bedroom only to find, the ceiling fan which was in motion had fallen on the bed where his wife, 14 month son and a 7 year old son were sleeping. The blades had turned crooked with the fall, his wife who was fast asleep awoke screaming. The entire fan body and blades were only a fraction of an inch from the mother and son. My son grabbed his son and held him close, put on the lights to see if any injury was done. There was not a scratch on the child or the mother. We are certain that our Blessed Mother protects her faithful children. Thank you Jesus and Mother Mary for the miraculous escape and your heavenly intervention. Thank you for all your graces and blessings and do continue to protect us.

*Mrs. Hilda Callaghan, Jabalpur, India*

**Don Bosco's Madonna**, has developed to its present form from a folder published in 1937, by late Fr Aurelius Maschio, on behalf of the Salesians of Don Bosco, Bombay.

The magazine is sent to all who ask for it, even though there is a fixed subscription (*Rs 200/- India & Rs 400/- Airmail*). We trust in the generosity of our readers/benefactors. Whatever you send us will help cover the expenses of printing and mailing; the surplus if any, is devoted to the support of orphans and poor boys in our schools and apostolic centres.

**To help a poor lad to reach the priesthood, is a privilege**

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