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*Mary encounters
God's fidelity
and through her
our Salvation
comes to pass!*

**St. Joseph
the husband of Mary
Protector of the
Universal Church**



From The Editor's Desk

So Hard to Forgive

A story goes thus: Ann and Joan were cousins who lived and worked happily together until they died. Ann was warm-hearted but contentious, often getting herself in rows and falling out with people.

Joan, in contrast, was gentle and agreeable, frequently called upon to make peace between Ann and those who had fallen foul of her.

One rainy day they on their way to the market when Ann noticed a bedraggled figure walking ahead, thumbing a lift. 'Who's that, Joan?' she asked. 'That's Lizzie Peters, the landlord's wife' Joan replied. 'Tell me, Joan, are we speaking to her?' Ann inquired. 'Oh, I'm sure we are' Joan smiled.

Sometimes, perhaps, it is amusing when we hear people not speaking to each other. Most times it is sad. It is sad, for instance, when colleagues at work pass each other in stony silence. It is sad, too, when close neighbours or long-time friends are set on avoiding each other's company. But it is tragic when members of the same family become estranged. The pain goes deeper and often lasts longer. Angry words hurt and angry silence wounds.

All of us, of course, are vulnerable, the strong as well as the weak. Any stranger can bruise us; any friend can break us. Our frail defences can be pierced by many sharp blades – slighted dignity, rights denied, confidences betrayed, promises broken, achievements ignored. Time may help us absorb the pain but only love can help us to absolve the offence.

Sadly, there are times when the gentle impulse of forgiveness stirs in our hearts, only to be stifled immediately by fear. We hesitate to make the first move for fear of being rejected, or being hurt again, or being taken for a fool. At other times, the impulse to forgive is not felt at all. This can happen especially when we have been hurt by the suffering of those who are close to us; when, say, a friend or relative is the innocent victim of callous cruelty. The hurt can go so deep that it damages our inner freedom and makes forgiveness seem like betrayal.

But whether our hurts are great or small, God's healing grace is always there for us. We can choose to accept or to reject it, to walk in freedom or to limp in chains. We can continue to feed our anger and withhold forgiveness. Or we can listen to the voice of Christ calling us to reach out in love, even to those who treat us badly. It is a call that comes to us from the Cross: from a crucified figure, rejected by his own people, who refuses the false comfort of revenge and utters the most generous words ever spoken: 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.'

Fr. Ian Douulton sdb

3. A NEW-FOUND VOCATION

by Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss

Our Lady of Good Health High School raises its modest yet proud structure in the centre of a low-income settlement in Saki Naka, one of the suburbs of Mumbai. Catering to some 1,200 children, from kindergarten to Standard X it is housed in the former lodgings of its director, Dr. Janet Hendricks. What is unusual about this school is that it grew by a steady and constant accretion not only to its student body, but also to its faculty and its material size.

Way back in 1984, Dr. Hendricks, a medical general practitioner in the area, was distressed by a common complaint of many of her patients: they could not afford the steep donations demanded by English-medium schools to which they aspired to send their budding ambitious children. Determined to do something concrete and tangible to meet this aspiration of theirs, she moved her family upstairs converting the ground floor of her sprawling bungalow into a school of sorts. The fifteen students who dared to accept the challenge of being the pioneers didn't take up all that much room either. Little did Dr. Janet count on word spreading like wildfire that the director at Good Health School was a Principal with a difference: she was loving, committed, considerate, and capable of giving children a sound English education. More enterprising youngsters began to pour in forcing Hendricks to

improvise...and that led them to move to Marol, the neighbouring suburb.

Humble Beginnings

The school soon acquired an additional building and today boasts of even a pocket-sized computer lab fitted with second-hand machines. Good Health School doesn't receive any government funding because it is classified as a private, independent English-medium school. Undeterred, Dr. Hendricks runs the school like she would a large and economically constrained household. Despite having to work perpetually with only a shoe-string budget, education is offered gratis or subsidized for those who can't afford it. This means that she has to walk a tight-rope – not a hair out of place, not a decibel too loud, not a scrap on the floor. The outcome of these unavoidable hardships is that the children learn more than the three 'Rs' – they imbibe habits of thrift and cleanliness, of taking responsibility for their school and its belongings, of lending a helping hand to anyone in need and also of maintaining tidiness of the school surroundings – no wonder that these students are better mannered than most other school children in the vicinity.

They are encouraged to speak in English when at school, and even the lower grades are improving their grasp of the language as they speak it with pride and confidence. "This is the

first year we were able to achieve a hundred percent result," Hendricks says with legitimate pride. Most of the teachers are products of this same institution, and so they work with an enviable sense of dedication, staying on late into the evenings tutoring 'special' students who are in need. Hendricks and her daughter Vanessa, who is now the principal, invest almost all their time and energies in the integral growth of their charges thus eliminating the need for that crutch or curse of modern education in India, whichever way one chooses to see it – the coaching class or tuitions. It is a school that has literally been built on the back of the founder. She knows the students like she knows her family. After all, this is home for one and all.

Lessons Learnt in this School

Most people do not taste the love of God directly, but only through another human being who shares in God's compassion for his needy children. One of the places specifically designed for us to experience God's personal love for each person is the Eucharistic celebration – provided, of course, one has grasped its central truth: the paschal mystery! This fundamental mystery reminds us that all human beings are called to live creatively which is possible only when three fundamental steps are taken generously yet courageously: letting-go in faith, letting-be in hope and letting-grow in love.

As Dr. Hendricks' school began burgeoning, especially in those first few months of its existence,

she was several times challenged to '**let-go** in faith' at quite a few levels. First of all there was the letting-go of her established profession as a medical practitioner. With admission offered to each new child, her worries and anxieties mounted steadily yet menacingly, challenging her to believe first of all in herself and in the merit of the choice she had made, and then also in Divine Providence who was leading her step by step into the unknown! Dealing with these simple children all day long also necessitated a letting-go of her social status and dignity in the eyes of at least some of her friends and relatives. And what about letting-go of her own comforts and conveniences, especially as she tied herself down to providing her charges with the very best, day-in and day-out?



An institution of the magnitude that caters to 1200 children today does not grow overnight or effortlessly like grass springing up after the first monsoon showers. Similar too, in the nurturing of a child from a tentative toddler to a self-confident teenager which calls for many a sleepless night, Dr. Hendricks would have had to **let-be** in hope – holding on to her dream of seeing her children grow up to be responsible citizens

with a sense of mission, able to make a significant difference wherever they are placed. Many would have been the occasions when she would have been tempted to ask herself: 'Why am I going through all this struggle – what is there in this for 'me'?' Hoping against hope like Abraham, she would have held on tenaciously – her God-given vision was authentic and would one day be realized! But, of course, it would take its own time and unfold according to God's inscrutable plan.

After seeing some of her protégés returning to share in her vision and dream, would come the next and perhaps most difficult of her challenges – to **let-grow** in love. Hers was a venture not just to make money, to achieve worldly renown or to work out a career. Her predominant concerns were not about herself or her family. Hers was a labour of love and unless each child in her care truly experienced that love, their education would ultimately come to nothing. What seems to have sustained her all these many years could be summed up in the prayer of St. Francis: 'Lord grant that I may never seek so much to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love with all my soul.' She has tasted the depth of truth in St. Paul's words to the elders at Ephesus: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' (Acts 20:25) and so the Eucharist has led her to a blessedness that very few indeed have the privilege to experience during their earthly journey.

Eucharistic Path to Fullness

All of this is what we celebrate each Sunday in our Eucharist. We come to the Eucharist because we are convinced that we have been singularly blessed by the Father. Deep down in each Christian heart is the burning desire to give back to God in some measure what we ourselves have received so lavishly. And this is so because the Eucharist makes present again the supreme example of Jesus' own self-gift of himself. Undaunted by the insults and ignominies heaped upon him, he lovingly broke of his very life and shared it with those who rejected him. Truly, 'greater love no one has than when a person lays down his life for his enemies!' (Jn 15:13). If it is true that 'he loved me and gave himself up for me' (Gal 2:20) how can we go through life, and especially show up at the judgment seat, empty-handed? And that too after hearing almost daily the Eucharistic command: 'Do this as a memorial of Me!'



The fullness of life Jesus came to bring us can be ours only when we sincerely empty ourselves of all self-seeking and step out in faith to make others happy. For 'it is in giving that we receive, in pardoning that we are pardoned and in dying that we are born to eternal life!' □

GOD'S WAYS ARE TRULY MYSTERIOUS!

Fr. Ashley Miranda, sdb

Administrator & Vice-Rector, Salesian Novitiate, Nashik



I joined Don Bosco School, Borivili (then St. Paul's) at the suggestion of an aunt of mine in 1974. It was very small then, more like a family. We, the boys of the junior most class were showered with lots of love and affection and life at school was exciting. We had a lot of opportunities to develop our minds and personality. I enjoyed school except for the fact that it lasted the entire day, so by the time I got home I found myself watching my friends at their football or cricket matches.

Catechism was taken seriously. Every First Friday and on other days too we Catholic boys attended a well animated Mass. The sermon though long, was invariably soul stirring. Best of all, the Mass was followed by tea and snacks.

Catechism classes were usually very creative and they made us sit up and think. I remember Fr. Elias Diaz trying to prove to us that God exists. With a pained expression on his face he wrote on the board the atheist says "GOD IS NOWHERE" then with a broad smile and with a triumphant flourish he struck the "NOWHERE" with a chalk in his hand, and then it read "GOD IS NOW/HERE". We were all immensely thrilled - God couldn't be denied so easily after all.

The memory that most stands out is the day God called me. I was in Std. X then. School had closed for the day and I was going home. Fr. Elias was at the entrance with a group of boys. I tried to slink away and I almost did but not before he called out to me, "Hey you come here!" "I father?" I stammered, "yes, yes, come here". All the boys were



quiet. As I approached, he asked me in the tone of a cop who had just nabbed a thief, "You! What do you want to become?" I had never ever asked myself that question so I hesitated then said, "a scientist." In his usual dramatic style Father went on, "What? A scientist!! You don't want to become a priest?" I hesitated but said, "Yes father, I want to be a priest."

Fr. Elias arranged for me to join the junior seminary at Lonavla in June 1980. I freely made my first profession as a Salesian in May 1983 and was ordained a priest in December 1993. In May 2008, I completed 25 years as a Salesian. God's ways are mysterious! These 25 years have been years of many challenges but also of much happiness and joy. I have experienced God's power and love in innumerable ways. In my turn I have tried, in spite of my many shortcomings, to share his love with those to whom I have been sent. It has been a wonderful life! I praise the Lord for calling me to be a Salesian and a Priest! God is truly very, very Good!□

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SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

Dedicated to Christ suffering for our sins

It is a good idea to visit a graveyard during Lent. As we move along the paths and look at the headstones we may read of the death of a child or of a boy in his teens, of a number of people who died in their fifties or sixties. We may even spot the names of some of who have reached ninety years or made the century and over it.

The short inscriptions carry a depth of meaning and educate us silently in the uncertainty of life and the reality of death. Our visit, without being in any way morbid, makes the message of Ash Wednesday more real. We are but dust and unto dust we shall return.

Such thoughts help us to assess calmly but seriously the quality of our lives. Are we doing anything worthwhile in the span of life that is ours? Are we grateful for all the gifts God has given us? Are we thankful to those who help us in life, who love us and put themselves out for us? Or do we live selfishly, taking others for granted and not bothering to help the poor and those who have been bruised by life?

But maybe, with the grace of God, we are trying to do something worthwhile, trying to bring zest and joy to life, to show compassion towards others, to generate around us an atmosphere of helpfulness, courtesy and love. Let us thank God if we are and pray for the grace not to grow discouraged in

doing good. But what if we are not?

When we think about Christ's suffering during this season, particularly during Holy Week, we must not become discouraged. From them we learn, it is true, the enormity of sin, the terrible evil of selfishness. But we also learn the greatness of Christ's love for us.

He was glad to suffer for us, if we could only learn from his wounds his patient love for us and the power of his forgiveness. By his wounds we are healed.

When we look upon him whom we have pierced we may well feel shame and sorrow because of our neglect of his love. But this spirit of contrition is something that should not depress or paralyze us with self-pity. Rather it should break the shell of our complacency or hardness of heart and release in our lives a new current of love, generosity and goodness.

When we think of the shortness of life and look upon our Lord on the cross and hear his prayer to the Father to forgive those who have crucified him, we should ask ourselves three very practical questions:

What have I done for Christ?

What am I doing for Christ?

What will I do for Christ?

Our Easter happiness may well depend on the answers we give to these important questions. □

YOUR HOME IS LOVE

Fr. Emile-Marie Brière

Your home is love, and without love, you gasp and die like a fish out of water. Without a friend and without the healing mercy of God, you will not have the strength to forgive yourself or others. We need each other, and we can heal each other.

We exist to love and be loved. And if we stop long enough to listen to our hearts, we know it. When we are without love, we sense that something is missing. Without love, there is a dull ache or a passionate yearning or a dead hope inside us.

One day a woman came to me with many theological questions. She had spoken to other priests, too. I gave her what I thought were adequate answers, but none of them satisfied her.

Her real question was: "Do you respect me? Am I lovable?"

Similarly, a man loudly discussed the problems of the world with an attitude of assurance and competency and he severely criticized everybody else's opinions. When I asked him what he was really after, he cried out, "One person who will love me."

We can heal each other. The love we carry in our hearts is a precious ointment for which others are yearning. So often that love remains unused, and unused it diminishes. As a result, the loneliness of those around us is unassuaged.

Sometimes we feel that our love is not good enough. It's true that we are poor, weak sinners, but God lives within us and shares with us his power to love.

Every day we are challenged to

love. Every day the forces of life struggle against the forces of death within us. Every day we have to make choices.

In the ping-pong game of giving and receiving, we miss the ball over and over. But let us pick it up and keep playing.

It takes faith to believe that love is the very fabric of reality. It takes courage to keep on loving when our love is rejected. It takes hope to believe in love when shame, fear and depression attack us from within.

Will there ever be unity among people? Will we ever know peace and be able to rest in one another's love and in the love of Christ?

All our lives, we struggle for hope, hope in the power of love.

The saints had to struggle for it, too, and they brought comfort and strength to many.

Let me tell you a little story. A man put on a lavish banquet for his friends. The table was laden with choice meats, seafood, salads and desserts. But the only available cutlery were long spoons.

Some people tried to feed themselves, but the spoons were so long that they couldn't get them into their mouths. So they remained hungry. Others used their long spoons to feed one another. These were lavishly fed.

May we Christians fully believe in the power of the love Christ has given us. May we seek to love and serve others. Then we will be truly living. We will be affirming to the world that God is alive and that he is our saviour. □

*Adapted from **The Power of Love**
(MH Publications)*

walking with the Church



SHIFTING OF THE SUNDAY OBLIGATION

by Fr. Edward McNamara, Professor of Liturgy
at the Regina Apostolorum University, Rome

Q1: *We here in Nepal have a very peculiar situation. Sunday is a normal working day in this country (I believe also in many Arabian countries). Therefore, over many years (30-plus), we have been having our entire Sunday celebration shifted to Saturday, the only day on which people could participate fully. However, this has led to some confusion: For some people it is hard to feel that the Sunday obligation is fulfilled by attending Mass on Saturday. Another problem is the question over what Mass to celebrate on Sunday. Some of us just repeat the same Mass; some others instead celebrate the Saturday Mass on Sunday. At times, some of the feasts on Saturdays are lost because of our particular situation. I personally miss the Saturday Mass, because I am used to celebrating on both days. And to add to all this, is our national calendar, which is different from the Gregorian calendar; the month begins somewhere in the middle of the Gregorian calendar. For all official purposes we have to use that national calendar, and most of our people too use that calendar. For example, we had debates on several occasions: When is the first Friday of the month? As per the Nepali calendar or the Christian calendar? – P.P., Katmandu, Nepal*

Q2: *Here in our country, very often parishes celebrate the parish feast on Sundays, e.g. the feast of St Jude's Church, etc. Is this correct? If the Sunday Readings are not proclaimed but some other readings pertaining to the feast day are read, I thought that it is not right to do so. – M.J., Colombo, Sri Lanka*

A: As both questions are related to the Sunday liturgy, I will attempt to answer them together.

In the first case, it is important to remember that for Christians Sunday as such is not a transferable feast. During the first three centuries Christians met on Sunday even though it was a normal working day, and many of them were slaves taking a great risk. This often meant getting up very early or perhaps sneaking out in the evening. (Of course, we are also in an epoch when the mere fact of being a Christian could lead to a painful death.) As one group of ancient martyrs famously related to the magistrate who sentenced them, "We cannot live without Sunday."

Sunday Mass has not lost any of its value or importance to the

lives of Catholics, nor have they become less heroic in defending their faith as recent events have shown. At the same time, the present circumstances of Christian living and the Church's desire to care for the spiritual needs of as many of the flock as possible can lead to some innovations.

Therefore what is the situation of Sunday in Nepal, Arabia and some similar situations?

First of all, Sunday always remains Sunday, and the proper liturgy of the day should always be celebrated. Likewise as far as possible the faithful should attend Mass on Sunday or on Saturday evening. If it is necessary and useful, then priests should be willing to celebrate Mass at unusual times.

In those cases where permission has been granted for Sunday liturgy to be celebrated on a Friday or Saturday morning because Sunday is a normal workday, it is important to note that it is not a case of transferring Sunday to another day. Rather, it is a pastoral response so that those Catholics who find it impossible to attend Mass on Saturday evening or Sunday might not be deprived of the riches offered by the three-year cycle of biblical readings and prayers.

Canonically speaking, those who are objectively unable to attend Sunday Mass are dispensed from the precept and in fact have no obligation to attend Mass on Friday or Saturday Morning. If they do attend, then they do something that is very

good. And when this is a common situation pastors act well in addressing their spiritual needs by providing the best liturgical fare while being careful to avoid the impression that they are moving Sunday to another day.

As our correspondent points out, this can sometimes lead to losing some celebrations that fall on a Saturday. In some cases it might be enough to mention the feast in the prayers of the faithful and the homily; on others it might be pastorally more useful to actually celebrate the feast on Saturday morning instead of using the Sunday texts.

The other question, regarding the proper calendar to follow when the local one is different, is something of a conundrum. In such cases the local bishops would be the ones to decide. If need be, the bishop would ask the Holy See for permission to change the dates of certain liturgical feasts that are tied to the Gregorian calendar, such as the solemnity of the Sacred Heart.

Since practices such as the first Friday or first Saturdays are devotional and not official liturgical practices, I see no difficulty in adjusting the practice to local needs.

Finally, a reply to our reader from Sri Lanka: Since the patron saint of a parish is usually ranked as a solemnity within the parish church itself, it is permitted to transfer the celebration to the nearest Sunday so as to allow as many parishioners as possible to attend. (*Zenit.org*) ▢

Witnesses in & for Our Times



ST. LOUISE DE MARILLAC, (MARCH 15)

SERVANTS OF THE POOR, FOR THE LOVE OF CHRIST

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

It is said that one day Napoleon was found listening to a group of luminaries enthusiastically discussing philosophy, politics and science. They seemed to be exalting the philosophy of Enlightenment that permeated a rather philanthropic society. The emperor listened for some time but gradually grew more and more impatient by their verbosity. All of a sudden he interrupted them saying: "This is all very good but there will never be anyone like a *grey sister*!" That was what the Daughters of Charity were called - founded in 1633 by Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marrillac.



The Daughters of the Charity or the Grey Sisters were aware that the State actually did nothing. They were real angels and strove to relieve pain everywhere where the civil and political authority refused to go. This important task was motivated by the example and teachings of their founders, Sts. Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac.

For more than thirty years St. Louise worked with St. Vincent de Paul with the same objective:

showing the merciful and compassionate face of God to the poor, especially those abandoned and rejected. They were spurred on to do this because of their great love for Jesus Christ.

Her Early Life

Louise de Marillac was born to wealthy parents in 1591. Sadness invaded her tiny life at a very early age when her mother died shortly after her birth. She was lovingly looked after by her father who had a tidy income that assured her of

a certain security. She was a wise and intelligent child and her early schooling was done at the convent of the Dominicans of Poissy. The recollected atmosphere that was fervent and cultured immediately fascinated her. Sadly, when her father's fortune diminished she changed schools and her education shifted to practical matters such as cooking and housekeeping. Biographers describe her as a pensive, faith-filled quiet girl, happy in her studies, yet marked by loneliness and sadness.

She lost her father when she was 13 years old and that further complicated her status. She was reduced to the state of an orphan since her stepmother and the other relatives (it seems) were not really concerned about her future.

The girl grew very fervent and she made a vow to devote herself completely to the Lord. At the age of 18 she was prepared to enter a convent but she was dissuaded from doing so because of her frail health. Since she could not become a nun she had to get married and so it was. It was a marriage that she had not consented to, but which was arranged by her relatives.

In 1613, Louise was 22 years old and she married a wealthy man and had a son. Free from financial worry, she devoted herself to her son's care and the needs of the local poor. Tirelessly she visited the poor in their homes, bringing food and washing them. With respect, patience, and a warm smile, she instructed them in their daily tasks, taught them

catechism and shared her love of God. This utter devotion to the less fortunate was her hallmark.

The year 1623 was an important year for Louise. She felt inspired and wrote: *"I understand that there will come a time when I will be able to take the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience like other people do... I would like to help my neighbour, but I cannot not understand how this can be done."* A sign from above came after some patient waiting and it crowned her dream to become a religious.

Louise followed this inspiration with humility, serenity and inner peace. At that time the circumstances of her life demanded that she stay beside her husband who was ill. She continued to nurse him with great devotion and tenderness for two whole years after which he died a holy death in 1626. She mentioned this as a great grace of God.

Meeting Vincent de Paul

Providence did not leave anything out. In order to fulfil her dream God directed Louise to meet someone who knew nothing of her inspiration in 1623. Divine Providence planned that she meet Vincent de Paul, a simple and devoted priest who took over her spiritual direction. Once self-absorbed in sorrow, Louise now grew to trust him completely as someone sent by Divine Providence. Vincent championed the cause of the needy, the downtrodden, the indigent and the unemployed. In his eyes, the poor were Jesus Christ and it took little time for him to realize that Louise shared his vision. While

Vincent founded the first confraternities of charity, which served the poor throughout France, Louise took charge of their management. By her example of hands-on service, she inspired hundreds of wealthy women to join her efforts, contributing not only their finances but also themselves, as laborers. Due to her relentlessness in serving her 'masters' as she affectionately called the poor, charities sprang up all over France and continue to exist in similar form today.

The Holy Pair

Louise would become the true companion of Vincent in carrying out his works of charity. She was always there with much discretion, wisdom and spiritual tenderness. Vincent always encouraged her to be happy, simple and humble reminding her of the importance of "holy indifference" in the light of whatever God wanted of her. She found in this the will of God and the mission He wanted her to fulfil.

Had not Christ lived for thirty years in obscurity in Nazareth before he began his public life? That was how Louise had to wait.

During this time she was getting to know the methods of Vincent's work with the poor. Suddenly a miracle took place. Then a day came when Louise became aware of her real mission in the Church.

In 1633, this "holy pair" founded the Daughters of Charity (that goes on today). It was a religious institute that both of them together directed for 27 years, until in 1660

both of them died a few months of each other.

It was a real revolution in the Church and society (women leaving convents to work!) and this was not accepted under the normal codes of conduct. Women religious and women in general remained out of sight and were not to be seen, but the Grey Sisters came out to help like women never before had done.

Her daughters were called **"servants of the poor,"** as if the poor were their true masters. Louise reminded her sisters in her admonitions and letters: **"In the name of God, dear sisters...be very loving and sweet with your poor. Be aware that they are your masters...."** And these poor were waifs, the abandoned, the homeless, the sick, the insane, prisoners, orphans, war victims and others in similar predicaments.

After Louise's death in 1660, her young granddaughter was found in tears, praying at her grandmother's tomb. She asked the Sister who happened upon her if there would still be Daughters of Charity now that her grandmother was gone. In response the Sister told Louise's namesake: "When all the poor in the world are no longer poor, when all the hungry are fed, and all the naked clothed, when the sick and the dying, and the abandoned babies, and the orphans, and the outcast, and the lonely and forsaken are all gathered in heaven, until that day, there will always be the Daughters of Charity." □

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Bedside Business

The old doctor had never refused a call, from rich or poor - but now he was tired. "Have you any money?" he asked a midnight caller. Certainly he had money. "Then go to the new doctor. I'm too old a man to get out of bed for anybody who can pay for it."

Substantial Hint

"I think," the new secretary announced triumphantly, "that the boss has decided to keep me!"

"Has he said anything?" her friend asked.

"No," she replied happily, "but this morning he bought me a dictionary."

Precise Position

Telling of a member expelled from her club, a woman said: "They dismembered her."

Pastoral Enthusiasm

Our maid asked for an advance on her week's salary. "Our preacher is leaving the church this Sunday," she told us, "and the congregation wants to give him a little momentum."

Appropriate Response

Six-year-old Jerry came downstairs bawling lustily.

"What's the matter?" asked his mother.

"Papa was hanging pictures and he just hit his thumb with a hammer," said Jerry.

"That's not so serious," soothed his mother.

"A big man like you shouldn't

cry at a trifle like that. Why didn't you just laugh?"

"I did," sobbed Jerry.

Prompt Customer Satisfaction

A dress shop received this note: "Dear Sir: You have not yet delivered that maternity dress I ordered. Please cancel the order. My delivery was faster than yours."

Frozen Confidentiality

Alice: "I thought you could keep a secret?"

Mabel: "Well, I kept it for a week, What do you think I am, a cold-storage plant?"

Hide and Seek

Woman to customs official closing her bags: "Does that mean you give up?"

Hearing Aid

During one of those interminable teenage telephone calls, I heard my daughter say, "Just a minute. Let me change ears."

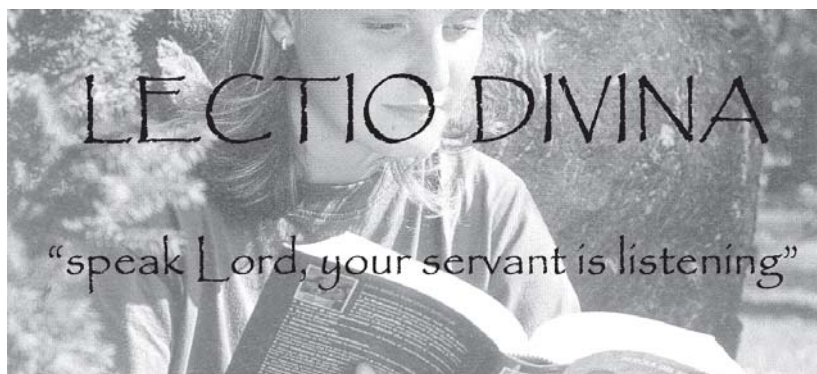
Couple Compatibility

Teenage boy to chum: "She and I like the same films, the same food, same records - trouble is we don't like each other!"

Ignorant Bliss

One sweet young thing arrived at her first football game after the first half. "The score is nothing to nothing," she heard a fan say.

"Oh, good," she cooed to her escort. "Then we haven't missed a thing." □



'BLESSED IS THE FRUIT OF YOUR WOMB JESUS'

by Roberta Fora

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

Mary was the channel through whom God came to earth. This is one of the greatest and most sublime of mysteries.

Who knows what emotions and feelings went through the mother of the Saviour during the nine months she was waiting for his birth.

For every mother the period that precedes a birth is a time of great trepidation while numerous thoughts constantly go through her mind. At times there are doubts or fears and her mind tends to wander...she will often dream of the little creature that is growing within her and she wonders about the colour of its eyes and its hair and so much else.

Mary certainly must have gone



through similar experiences. Her time was spent waiting intensely and profoundly. She was perfectly in tune with the Lord, alert, recollected and attentive to his voice during her daily moments of prayer and solitude.

Jesus is the most blessed and the miraculous fruit of Mary's womb. God had sent him to earth to fulfil his salvific mission among humankind.

Jesus, born of Mary grew in wisdom and grace within his family at Nazareth, under the watchful guidance Joseph his foster father, the silent and hardworking husband and of his mother, Mary. As soon as he was became a grown man he left his family behind and devoted himself entirely to the plan of salvation that God had designed for him.

At this point it is interesting to reflect on some significant moments of his life. The Lord was born in a stable not in a palace fit for a king. His first visitors were not from the nobility but the humble shepherds of the little town of Bethlehem.

Now that he was an adult, he sought out some friends to have around him in order to complete his mission. They would also help him in his preaching. The first two were James and John, poor fishermen whom he found along the shore of Lake Tiberias.

During his last Passover, before Jesus was arrested, tortured and killed, he was aware that the time had come for him to return to his Father, he decided to bid them farewell at a very special dinner. Just before he consecrated the bread and wine, he gave his disciples a puzzling lesson in humility. He washed their feet and wiped them with a towel that he had tied around his waist. After

that the most grueling moments ensued: his passion, scourging, crowning with thorns, being insulted and derided by the soldiers. Through all this he never uttered a word. He suffered everything meekly and silently.

The culminating moment was most certainly his death on the cross.

Christ, as man, felt abandoned by everyone even by God but just before he breathed his last he fervently surrendered himself totally to his Father. Three days later he rose from the dead just as he had promised.

Blessed be the Lord, born of the Virgin Mary, the beginning and the end of our existence! The journey of the Christian is strewn with obstacles, crosses that he cannot escape but we have nothing to fear. Christ surrendered himself to God and by his resurrection he conquered death.

Therefore, for us, there is a light that dispels the darkness of suffering and death, a certainty that God calls us to eternal life and joy without end.

Intercede for us, dear mother Mary that we may follow the example of Christ your son. May we live humbly, walking courageously through life's problems and yearning to be united with you one day in the kingdom of heaven for all eternity. □



DEDICATED TO
THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Quiet

IF YOU SEE W

by Edmund Keane SJ in serious mood
shine, of darkness a

Thoughts on Darkness

Nature can be indifferent to our sorrows. A land may be gripped by famine, yet the sun continues to rise and shine upon the stricken fields: in the middle of war-torn countryside a bird may start from a bush and sing: our hearts may be broken at a graveside, yet at that moment a rainbow may leap across the sky.

But on Calvary the sun refused to shine upon the scene of the crucifixion. The most heinous crime of man, the killing of the Lord of nature, did not pass without a protest from nature herself. 'It was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour'.

In the gathering gloom the crowd began to trickle away, fear gnawing at their hearts. Many who left the scene were anxious to distract their minds from what they had just been witnessing: they were anxious to get back to the market-places of the city, to a scene of bustle and chatter. In this way they hoped to shut out from their eyes the sight of the Crucified One and to expunge from their ears the words of love and mercy that he had uttered from the cross.

They crept away from the scene of Christ crucified, saying to themselves 'I won't allow myself to think of it now', and plunged into the deeper darkness of an unreal world – unreal because it has no place for him who is the Light of the World.

Faith Shaken?

I think it is true to say that many persons have lost their faith or, at least, have had their faith badly shaken, by being unable to accept what I call the human face of the Church. This is so sad, especially as it is really the result of ignorance – a mistaken view of what the Church is and the consequent false expectations.

Their mind, I suspect, runs something like this:

The Church of Christ is supposed to be holy and claims to possess the complete truth – the truth of Christ. *But* I find that strange errors and attitudes have occurred in the past, and I still see some – to me – mistakes and errors adopted by present representatives of the Church, priests, bishops, even Popes. Then there are things like commercialism at the holy shrines, the odd individual scandal, the priest whom I found very un-Christian-like in the confessional. *Therefore* it must



Spaces

WHAT I MEAN

*writes of the day the sun refused to
and closed doors.*

be all wrong and I can't subscribe to it any more.

It's very sad that sincere, reasonably intelligent people can be put off so easily just because their idea of Christ's Church is so far wide of the mark.

Yes, the Church of Christ is holy, because it is the Mystical Body of Christ through which he continues to give to the world his healing, saving gifts of truth and life - the Sacraments, the Mass, his gifts of grace, the animation of the Holy Spirit.

But Christ entrusted the continuation of his mission to human beings with all their limitations and sinfulness, or, as F.J. Sheed puts it "the trouble is that the world, looking at the Church, does not see Christ: it sees only us. We - popes, bishops, presidents, priests, nuns, you, I - are the faces He presents to the world and it does not always attract" (*The Church and I*).

So, Christ's Church, besides its divine origin, has also a human element, a human face, and this is the face that some people - really quite irrationally - find unacceptable.

Christ compared his kingdom to a field with a mixture of wheat and weeds, and this would always be so. We can't expect all the living human members of the Church to be in a state of perfection. We are still on the way.

No Handle

I'm sure nearly everybody knows that painting called 'The Light of the World' by Holman Hunt. It has, I think, been reproduced many times as a 'holy picture'. In it we see Christ in a rather over-grown garden at midnight. He looks sad, wears the crown of thorns and holds a lantern in his right hand: with his left he is knocking on a heavily panelled door that looks as if it hadn't been opened for a long time. One is naturally reminded of the words of Apocalypse (3, 20): "Behold, I stand at the gate and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me".

There is a story associated with the first unveiling of this picture. If my memory serves me right there was supposed to be one critic present who remarked to the artist "Mr. Hunt, your work doesn't seem to be finished. There is no handle on the door!" "That", Holman Hunt is said to have replied, "is the door to the human heart. It can only be opened from the inside". ■



Family Secrets

Helen Morgan

The story so far:

At the age of twenty-six, Sarah Williams' life has been turned upside down by the death of her mother and father in a car crash. She had always been led to believe that her parents, Tom and Bridie, had no living relatives, yet an old friend, Dr. Jim Brennan, arrives at the funeral to inform her that she has extended family in Ireland. Sarah puts on hold her wedding plans to her fiancé, Jonathan, and takes up an invitation from her mother's sister, Nuala. Leaving behind her native English town of Kingsborough, she comes to the Irish village of Killpatrick, to meet her mother's family. There, she encounters more mystery in the form of a photograph of her grandmother. Her mother always told her she looked like her; yet Sarah can see no resemblance at all...

After the noise of Kingsborough, it seemed to Sarah that Killpatrick slept in a timeless silence. She marvelled at

the beautiful scenery and the friendliness of the people. In the short time she had known her mother's family she had grown fond of them and wondered why her mother had cut them out of her life.

Her Auntie Nuala was a warm-hearted woman and her Uncle Con, a quiet, inoffensive man. Her cousins already treated her like one of the family.

Towards the end of the week, her mother's younger sister, Kate, who had been visiting her Down's syndrome son, Sean, in Dublin, invited her to tea. Perhaps she could throw some light on why her mother had severed all connections with her family twenty-seven years earlier.

Nuala and her family had never mentioned the subject. Her cousin, Kevin, a journalist with a Dublin newspaper, drove her to her aunt's flat where she was welcomed with open arms. Kate was a kindly woman, tall and

slim, with heavy-lidded blue eyes.

'Well how are you Sarah?' she asked as they sat down to tea together. 'I can't get over poor Bridie dying like that and poor Tom too. It broke my heart when I heard the news and to think that none of us even knew where they were.'

'Aunt Kate, why did Mum and Dad cut themselves off from their families?' asked Sarah, seizing the opportunity.

'Well it's a long story and all ancient history now. What did your parents tell you?'

'Nothing at all,' she replied. 'They always denied having families.'

'Well I can understand why they might do that. You see they were very badly treated here,' she replied.

'By whom?' asked Sarah, surprised.

'Their families,' replied Kate.

'What happened?' asked Sarah, interested.

'Well, I'll have to go back to the beginning. When Bridie met Tom, I was already engaged to my late husband, Bill. Tom came from a well-off farming family a few miles outside the town and being the older of two sons, was due to inherit the farm when his mother died.

'Tom was a Protestant and Bridie a Catholic and in those days, it wasn't considered right for one to marry the other. When his mother heard he was going to marry a Catholic she disowned him. She then made over the farm to the younger son, leaving Tom with neither a job nor a home. He found lodgings with Jim Brennan's widowed sister and that's how Tom and Jim met.'

Sarah listened attentively as she heard the true story of her parents' romance for the first time.

'Our mother gave Bridie a terrible time when she heard she was going to marry a Protestant. She told her she would never have a day's luck. Her last words to Bridie as she left the house on her wedding day were, 'You've made your bed so you can lie on it!'

'They were married in St. Fintan's Catholic Church here in Killpatrick but on the side altar as it was a mixed marriage. I was the only member of either family to attend.

'After the wedding, they moved into a rented house not far from here and settled down to married life. It must have been very hard for Bridie. You see when I married Bill the previous year, my mother paid for my wedding reception and gave me a deposit for a house as well. Poor Bridie got nothing, not even a dish cloth!

'Shortly after I married I found out that my husband was a gambler. Money slipped through his hands like water and it was a constant battle to pay the bills. I couldn't go to my mother for help. She was a very hard woman, Sarah, and there was nobody else to turn to. I was too ashamed to tell Bridie. There was no Gamblers Anonymous then and those were the days when a married woman was looked down on if she went out to work.'

'It must have been very difficult for you Aunt Kate,' commented Sarah.

'It was,' replied Kate. 'But to make a long story short we eventually lost the house and my mother blamed me. She said I was a bad manager. Little did she know!'

‘What age were my parents when they married?’ asked Sarah.

‘Let me see now... your Mum would have been about twenty-five and your Dad about twenty-seven. They were married in 1947.’

‘So it was six years before I came along,’ she said, voicing her thoughts.

‘Oh yes, you were a long way down the road. They had tried every way they could to adopt long before that.’

‘Adopt? What do you mean, Aunt Kate?’ asked Sarah feeling decidedly uncomfortable. Kate’s face grew red with embarrassment.

‘You mean you don’t know?’

‘Know what Aunt Kate? Are you saying I’m adopted?’ she asked incredulously.

‘Oh Sarah darling, I could cut my tongue out!’ said Kate deeply upset at her blunder. ‘It never occurred to me that you didn’t know. Didn’t your mother tell you she couldn’t have children?’

‘Yes, but that was after I was born,’ she innocently replied.

‘No darling. That was after Catherine was born.’

‘Catherine? Who’s Catherine?’ asked Sarah, feeling the bottom drop out of her world. □

To be continued

Form IV

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I, Fr. Ian Doulton, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dated: March 1, 2009

Sd/-
Fr Ian Doulton sdb

Don Bosco: The Times, The Man, The Facts

DON BOSCO ON THE GALLOP

by Enzo Bruni (T/A:ID)

We know how Don Bosco was attracted to sports and how he was blessed with exceptional talents if he wished to pursue it. It was during those vivacious years in Chieri that we would have seen the young Johnny Bosco challenge visiting mountebanks and charlatans with much success, earning the admiration of his friends.

But perhaps, little is known of how he risked riding horses barebacked. How and where he honed this skill is not really known but we may suppose that since he grew up in the countryside, the presence of horses as a means of getting from place to place as also for work or leisure, could not be ruled out.

Don Bosco narrates in his *Memoirs* a curious fact that taught him an invaluable lesson.

By June 1841 Don Bosco was already a priest. For some months he had the experience of being the assistant pastor of the parish of Castelnuovo. His task was easy. It was his birthplace. The people loved and appreciated him. He wrote in his *Memoirs*: "I visited the sick and administered the holy sacraments to them, except penance since I had not yet taken the exam. I buried the dead and kept the parish records. My delight was to meet children and teach them catechism....Whenever I left the presbytery there was a group



of boys, and everywhere I went my little friends gave me a warm welcome..." (MO pg. 175)

He went on: "As I had a certain facility in expounding the word of God, I was in much demand as a preacher, to give festal homilies in the nearby villages.

"On a Sunday in October I was invited to speak at the Parish of Lavriano for the feast of St. Benignus, a few kilometers from Castelnuovo. I was happy to accept and to do justice to the occasion. I prepared myself and





wrote out my sermon carefully, trying to make it popular and at the same time polished. I had to celebrate Holy Mass for the people before setting off. To get there in time for the sermon I decided to make the journey on horseback. Sometimes trotting, sometimes galloping I was about half way along when I passed a millet field and a flock of sparrows took sudden flight. The noise of their flight frightened the horse, and he bolted down the road and across the fields and meadows. Somehow I managed to stay in the saddle, but then I realized that it was slipping under the horse's

belly. I tried an 'equestrian maneuver' but the saddle was out of place and it catapulted me on to a heap of stones. From a hill close by, a man could see this accident; he ran to my assistance with one of his workers and, finding me unconscious, carried me to his house and laid me on his bed. They gave me the most loving care and after about an hour I came to and realized that I was in a strange house. The good man reassured me that my thanks were not necessary.

While waiting for the doctor he told me what had happened to him: "You do not know me, but even I've got around a bit and know what it is to need help. Many a spill I've had going to fairs and markets. I have lots of things I could tell you. Like this one. One Autumn I was going to Asti on my donkey to collect winter provisions. On my way home, when I got to the valley of Murialdo, my poor beast, quite overloaded, fell in a mud hole and





lay there in the middle of the road unable to move. Every effort to get her up again proved useless. It was midnight, dark and wet. Not knowing what else to do, I shouted for help. In a few minutes someone answered from a little house nearby. They came, a seminarian and his brother, and two other men with a lamp to light their way. They got her out of the muck, having first unloaded her. They took me and all my baggage to their house. I was half dead and covered with mud. They cleaned me up and put new life into me with a magnificent supper. Then they gave me a nice, soft bed. In the morning before I left I wanted to pay them for all they had done for me, but the seminarian turned everything down flat, saying, "Who knows? Someday we may need your help."

Don Bosco continued: "I was moved to tears by his words. When he saw my reaction, he asked me if I were ill.

"No," I replied, "your story gives me great pleasure and that's what moves me."

"How happy I would be," he went on, "if I knew what I could do for that good family! What fine people!"

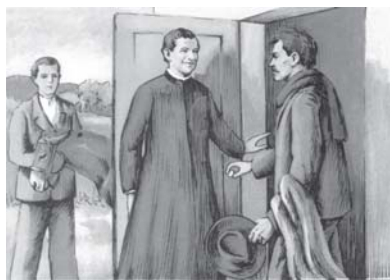
"What was their name?"

"Bosco," he said, "popularly known as Boschetti. But why are

you so moved? You know them, maybe? How is that seminarian?"

"That seminarian, my good friend, is this priest whom you have repaid a thousand times for what he did for you, the very one whom you've carried to your home and put into this bed. Divine Providence wants to teach us through this incident that one good turn deserves another."

It is easy to imagine the joy and



the wonder of all those present. The doctor arrived a short time later. He found no broken bones. After a few hours Don Bosco was able to return home on horseback with his beautiful sermon in his pocket. John Brina went the whole way home with him. For as long as he lived they remained fast friends. Don Bosco concludes: "After this warning, I firmly resolved that in the future I would prepare my sermons for the greater glory of God, and not to appear learned and erudite.

That was how the young John Bosco was formed, constantly attentive to the voice of God that came to him through the incidents of his daily life. Through this attentiveness he was able to educate his boys and teach them how to read with open hearts the messages that Providence wrote in their daily lives. That is the ordinary way to Salesian sanctity. □

LONDON

A new environmental edition of the Bible has been published.

"The poor and vulnerable are members of God's family and are the most severely affected by draughts, high temperatures, the flooding of coastal cities, and more severe and unpredictable results of climate change." Archbishop Desmond Tutu says in the foreword to HarperCollins' *The Green Bible*.

"We, who should have been responsible stewards preserving our vulnerable, fragile planet home, have been wantonly wasteful through our reckless consumerism, devouring irreplaceable natural resources," he says.

The *Green Bible* has received a stamp of approval from the Sierra Club. The book highlights environmentally significant portions of the holy text in green, is printed with soy ink on water coated recyclable paper, and features earth conscious essays from St. Francis of Assisi, Pope John Paul II and others.

It also highlights in green more than a thousand passages relating to God's love for creation and the role of humans in caring for the earth.

Along with the biblical text, the book includes a set of essays by theologians and conservationists.

"It helps rectify a misperception that this is not a biblical issue," says Peter Illyn, an evangelical pastor who founded an environmental stewardship group called Restoring Eden to foster awareness across the denominational spectrum.

The *Green Bible* comes in the New Revised Standard Version, which is

accepted by Protestants, Roman Catholics, and the Orthodox.

Matthew Sleeth, a former medical doctor concerned about environmental degradation who came into Christianity through reading the Bible, is the author of "Serve God, Save the Planet."

"When I started doing this, my own church wouldn't let me speak from the pulpit," he says.

"But," he says, "now many churches who call themselves conservative are taking it up," and he has seen Christian colleges change their behaviour, modifying curriculum and finding ways to reduce their carbon footprint. CATHNEWS

VATICAN CITY

The famed operatic tenor **Placido Domingo** has recorded an album of songs inspired by the poems of the late Pope John Paul II.

The album, titled *Amore Infinito* (Infinite Love), features 12 songs that highlight such themes as gratitude, freedom, the soul, the conscience and a mother's love. Some of the recordings are duets, including one song, *Love*, performed by the tenor's son, Placido Domingo Jr.

Produced by the German label Deutsche Grammophon, the album was released in Italy on November 28. The same day Domingo appeared at Vatican press conference to launch the new disc.

Pope John Paul wrote poems under a pseudonym during his years in Poland; as pope, he published a volume of spiritual verses in 2003. His poetic works are spiritual in tone and treat a wide

variety of subjects and experiences, including literature, theatre, factory work and young love.

In addition to Domingo's son, four other artistes each perform on one track of the new album: Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli, US Gospel singer Vanessa Williams, Welsh opera star Katherine Jenkins and US symphonic pop singer Josh Groban.

Domingo performed before Pope John Paul II at a Mass in 1995, and last April he sang at a Mass in Washington celebrated by Pope Benedict XVI. In 2003, he sang a prayer for peace that Pope John Paul had written the year before for an inter-religious service in Assisi, Italy. CNS

THE VATICAN

The International Year of Astronomy, which began Jan 1 was established by the United Nations to coincide with the 400th anniversary of Galileo Galilei's first use of the telescope to observe the cosmos.

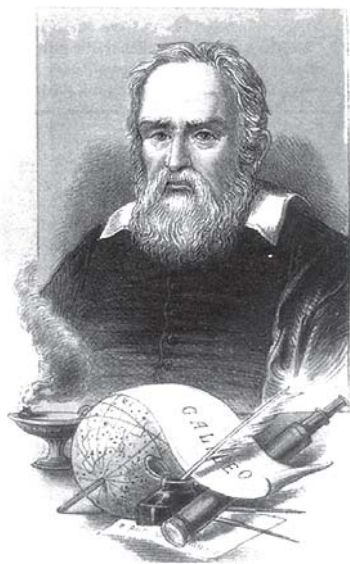
The Vatican is also celebrating the star-studded jubilee year, as the Vatican Museums, the Vatican Observatory and other Vatican offices participate in several special initiatives.

In late December, Pope Benedict XVI rang in the year of astronomy early by sending his greetings to those participating in the year-long celebration.

The pope has repeatedly praised Galileo, calling him a man of faith who "saw nature as a book written by God."

The pope also said the discoveries of science and astronomy can help people better appreciate the wonders of God's creation.

As part of the astronomy year, Jesuit Brother Guy Consolmagno is



one of more than 50 scientists from around the world who is contributing to a new Cosmic Diary blog. The U.S. Jesuit and other contributors reveal in the blog – www.cosmicdiary.org – what it's like to be an astronomer and explain details of their research.

The Vatican Observatory also will help organize a week on astrobiology at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences in November.

Astrobiology studies life in the universe and is hot on the hunt for extraterrestrial life and so-called "Goldilocks planet". Like the porridge this childhood storybook character gobbles up, it's a theoretical planet that is not too hot and not too cold, but just the right distance from the sun to sustain life.

The observatory is also partnering with the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State to publish a book on the history of astronomy and the Vatican.

In June a week-long

international symposium will cover the role of astronomy in the 21st century, science education and the dialogue that is needed between science and culture.

A special exhibit will open in October at the Vatican Museums displaying historical astronomical instruments. It will showcase antique instruments, spanning time from Galileo to models of the enormous telescopes used in astronomical research today.

Lastly, a large statue of Galileo is supposed to be erected somewhere in Vatican grounds. Paid for through private donations, the work of art was commissioned by the Pontifical Academy of sciences to honour the 17th century scientist. So far, there has been no word yet on when the statue will move into its new home.

Some Church leaders expressed how the celebrations finally will put to rest the long suspicion that the Church was hostile toward science.

Only 16 years have passed since Pope John Paul II formally acknowledged that the Church erred when it condemned the Italian astronomer for maintaining that the earth revolved around the sun.

Even though it happened some 400 years ago, "the dramatic clash of some churchmen with Galileo has left wounds that are still open", wrote Jesuit Father Jose Funes, director of the Vatican Observatory, in the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano*.

He said the Galileo case may never be closed in a way that would make everyone happy.

"The Church in some way recognized its mistakes" regarding Galileo but "perhaps it could have done better: One can always do better," he wrote, adding that he

hoped the year would help smooth strained relations between faith and science.

One Vatican official recently proposed that Galileo would make "the ideal patron saint for dialogue between science and faith". Archbishop Gianfranco Ravasi, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture, told Vatican Radio that Galileo, as a man of science and faith, showed the two were compatible as long as each operated within its specific field.

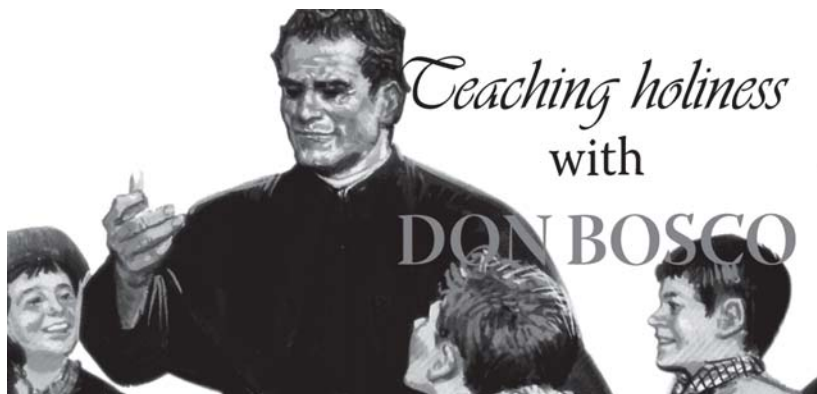
The good that came from the "dark shadow" of Galileo's condemnation was discovering theology should never, as it had during Galileo's time, use science to prove religious objectives especially in ways that hinder scientific study, he said.

But, he added, science also must not look down on theology as intellectually inferior - as if it were a kind of depository for a "Paleolithic intellect of the past".

The archbishop made the comments while he was participating in the culture council's congress on "Science 400 Years After Galileo Galilei". Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Vatican Secretary of State, also participated in the November congress.

Cardinal Bertone said Galileo helped transform the nature of knowledge so that it would no longer be based on the certainties established by tradition, but on the truth derived from scientific experimentation.

However, he added, science must not completely divorce itself from its moral traditions and laws which can help ensure that scientific developments remain ethical and at the service of humanity. CNS □



MICHAEL MAGONE

His Spirituality

by Claudio Russo

Michael Magone's Christian Faith was put into action not only by the way he went out of himself to help his companions but also in a spirit of gratitude for the

Faith he now cherished so much.

Looking for an unknown confessor

One morning some boys of the



Oratory decided to go for confession to a church outside the Oratory to a confessor who did not know them. They tried to convince Michael with a thousand reasons about their plan.

"No, I don't want to go anywhere without the permission of my superiors," said Michael without hesitation. "I am not a thief or a brigand. Thieves or brigands are frightened of being recognized by the police and that is why they go looking for places where they are unknown so that they won't be discovered. No, I have my confessor; and I confess to him all my sins, big and small without any fear. The craving to go elsewhere for confession shows that you do not love your confessor or that you have serious sins to confess."

Like an Ass

Occasionally a friend of Michael from Carmagnola visited him. Through all the laughter and chatter Magone tried to convert this youngster who was filled with doubts and uncertainties about his Faith.

One day this friend of his told him of one of their companions who had estranged himself from God for a long time, "yet he is fat and flourishing and is doing very well," concluded Magone's friend. Michael stared hard at him and remained silent for a moment, then taking his hand he led him to a cart that was standing by the playground where they were unloading material for construction: "You see that mule?" Michael said to his friend pointing to the animal. "He is also big and fat, and he has never been to confession, and I believe he has never entered a church either. Do

you wish to become like that animal who has neither soul nor brains?" Magone's friend was speechless and mortified and from that day he never tried to convince Magone of his religious duties with frivolous motives.

A Way of Saying "Thanks"

Michael never liked to spend his vacations at his home in Carmagnola because, according to him, "at home there are the earlier dangers, the places, the pranks, the companions who would drag me to live like I did before, and I don't want that way of life anymore. I would go for vacations only when I am strong enough to overcome the dangers."

Don Bosco knew his motive and so he sent Michael on a trip to Becchi, his own home together with his other companions. Don Bosco commented: "Seeing his good behavior that was worthy of a prize, I wanted to go myself and so with a few of his companions I also made the trip. During the journey I had an opportunity to have a long chat with Magone and became aware that the degree of his virtue was far superior to what I had heard."

On the road the group was suddenly caught in a downpour. They hurried onward and reached Chieri all drenched. In the city lived a dear benefactor, Cavalier Marco Gonella. He had often welcomed the boys of the Oratory of Valdocco into his house together with Don Bosco when they were hiking in those parts.

Even on that occasion the Cavalier opened his doors to Don Bosco and his boys and helped

them dry themselves. He invited them to lunch as they had all come in from a long walk and were famished.

After some rest, Don Bosco and his boys thanked their gracious benefactor, bade him farewell and continued on their way. "As they walked along the road, Magone remained at the back of the group," wrote Don Bosco. "One of his companions thought he was tired and so he stepped back and whispered to him in a soft voice: 'Are you tired? Are your legs aching from the walk?'"

"Tired? Oh, no! I could walk up to Milan."

"What were you saying in a soft voice just a moment ago all by yourself?"

"I was saying the Rosary for that good gentleman who was so generous with us and whom we cannot compensate in any other way. That is why I am praying to the Lord and his Blessed Mother to bless him and his home and give him a hundred times over what he has given us."

And Don Bosco added: "Michael was grateful for any little favour."

That was the same sentiment of gratitude that Michael showed to the Parish Priest of Castelnuovo d'Asti when he invited some boys of the Oratory for polenta at his house. Don Bosco narrates: "On the evening of that day Michael said to me: 'If it is alright with you I would like to receive Holy Communion tomorrow for the Parish Priest who has made us so happy today.'"

Prevention from Falling

During a vacation at Becchi, Don Bosco and his boys went on a walk through a nearby forest. After a little while, Magone, very silently left the

group and was returning home, but a boy of the group saw him and thought he wasn't well, followed him from some distance right up to the house. When he entered the house he lost sight of him.

He looked for him in all the rooms until he found him all alone on his knees in the little chapel, before the Blessed Sacrament.

Some time later when he was asked why he left the company of his friends to make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, Michael replied: "I feared that I would revert to offending God and so I came back to pray to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament that he might give me the strength to persevere in his holy grace."

A List of Resolutions

On the occasion of the novena of the Immaculate Michael wrote out a list of resolutions that he wished to carry out:

1. To pray and honour the Madonna;
2. To make a General Confession;
3. To forego breakfast everyday as penance for all the sins I have committed;
4. To receive Communion everyday;
5. To frequently talk to the Madonna about his friends;
6. To bring this list to the feet of the Madonna and to consecrate myself to her in this way.

Don Bosco permitted Michael to carry out all his resolutions except the foregoing of his breakfast. This sacrifice was to be replaced with a prayer in suffrage for the souls in Purgatory. □

LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

My sincere thanks to the Lord Jesus and his Mother Mary for giving me a complete recovery from an illness that I had suffered for the past three years. Do bless and keep my son and me under your protection.

Mrs. Claudina and Joseph D'Souza

Thanks for everything dear Mother Mary.

Sophie, Chennai

Thank you dear Mother for helping my son return home from Delhi.

Daniel Fernandes, Mumbai

My son had appeared for an interview in the US and it seemed to have gone well but he received a regret letter and was very disheartened. Trusting in Our Lady I prayed and suggested to my son that he write a letter to the HR department. Miraculously he received a reply the following day stating that they had reconsidered his case. Now he has the job and is doing very well. I believe Our Blessed Mother does work miracles for those who have recourse to her.

I. Quadras, Mumbai

Thank you dear Mother Mary for blessings my family.

Arnawaz Jeffrey Cabral, Kuwait

Thank you, dearest Mother Mary for blessing us with our home.

Kevin, Geraldine and Logan Peters, Sydney, Australia

Every day I go for my morning walk and I pray the Rosary faithfully. On Monday 29th Dec. 08, as I began the Rosary on my walk I stopped near a monsoon drain to pluck some Neem leaves from a tree on the other side of the drain. While stretching my hand my shoe slipped and I fell in the drain 6 feet deep. Being very slippery I couldn't climb out. I walked through the drain and a few feet ahead I found a sturdy pipe with the help of which I managed to climb out. I do believe that Our Lady protected me from any severe injury.

James Devaraj, Malaysia

Our unending praise to Our Lady for the many favours and blessings granted to my family.

Dr. Hazel Fernandes, Dublin, Ireland

The doctor had diagnosed that my daughter had a murmur in her heart. I prayed the devotion of the three Hail Marys. We did the echo test and result was a silent murmur. Thank You Mother Mary.

Chiara Gomes, Goa

Thank you dear Mother Mary for all the graces and favours we have received.

Evelyn Hopkins, Mumbai

We are most grateful to Jesus and Mother Mary for helping our son secure a good job.

Anthony and Jennifer, Australia

Heartfelt thanks to our heavenly Mother for blessing me with a good job abroad. Dearest Mother always keep us under your protection.

Savio De Souza, Goa

Belated, but sincere thanks to Mother Mary, Help of Christians and Dominic Savio for curing me from my backache, acidity and helping my son pass in his SSC examination. Thank you also for all the other graces which I have received.

Daisy Fernandes, Navi Mumbai

THE DEVOTION OF THE THREE HAIL MARYS



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

Thank you dear Mother Mary for the successful operation of my 9 year old granddaughter. In all my difficulties I have always had recourse to Our Blessed Mother, through the faithful recitation of the three Hail Marys. May she continue to protect all my family members.

Ivone Paes, Goa

I am 74 years old, and over a period of time, I had developed a swelling in my left foot. It gradually made walking rather painful. I tried massage oils both ayurvedic and allopathic but the swelling and the pain persisted. Having read letters of thanks written by many, I started this devotion of reciting the Three Hail Marys. I can assure the readers that now I walk without any pain and the swelling has gone. I am grateful to Our Blessed Mother.

Lt. Col. Celestine (retd.) Bangalore

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

Antonieta Simoes, Macau (South China)

We started constructing a small living room for one of our tenants. That began in the month of September. In two months before the heavy rains it was complete without exceeding our budget. During these two months I prayed the 3 Hail Marys fervently and I believe that the construction went as planned because Mary was there. We are sincerely grateful to Our Blessed Mother.

Dr. Rosario Gomez, Chennai

My mother has been a subscriber *Don Bosco's Madonna* for quite some time now but I was never a dedicated or regular reader of it. However, in the past few months I have been glancing through it regularly and also carried the magazine in my bag when I went to class. I have been studying for my GMAT and have just completed all my applications for my MBA abroad. I had promised that if I secured admission into a good college abroad I would mention my testimony in *Don Bosco Madonna*. I am grateful to God that I have secured admission in a very good school abroad. I am still waiting for other colleges but with a secured admission I am already set on the path of success thanks our Lord Jesus Christ, Mother Mary, Don Bosco, Dominic Savio. *Bryan D'Souza, Mumbai*

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

Dear Mother Mary and Don Bosco, thank you for helping me to settle down steadily in a happy marriage and for getting me a loving life partner. *Bosco Robert, Mumbai*

Thank you for the countless graces and blessings received through the powerful intercession of Our Lady, help of Christians and Don Bosco. *Mrs. Annie D'Mello, Goa*

Thank you, Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the gift of a baby girl and grand child. *Albano Godinho, Goa*

Thank you Heavenly Father, Jesus, Mother Mary and Don Bosco for the grace of a successful operation which I underwent. *F. Rodrigues, Mumbai*

Dear Mother Mary and Don Bosco for the financial assistance we received in the hour of our need, for the gift of a conception to our daughter after four years of marriage and for a favourable verdict from the high court in my brother's favour. *Mrs. Queenie Viegas, Mumbai*

My sincere thanks to Our Lord Jesus, Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for settling my sister's marriage and for all the favours showered on our family. *A Devotee, Mumbai*

Thank you, dear Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for all the special favours that have been received. Protect us always. *F. Fernandes, Mumbai*

Sincere gratitude to Jesus, Mother Mary and Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for curing my daughter from her fever and my son from his back ailment. Thank you also for the gift of my grandchildren and for all the other graces received. *A. Mendonca, Mumbai*

Thank you dear Mother Mary and Don Bosco for the miraculous favour granted to my daughter who has successfully appeared for her Engineering examinations. *Jessi Ghosh, Mumbai*

My sincere and heartfelt thanks to Our Lady help of Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the safe delivery and gift of a lovely baby girl to my daughter Simi and for all the blessings showered on my family. *Joyce B. Vaz, Bangalore*

My sincere thanks to Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for curing my daughter of her sickness. *Mrs A. George, Mumbai*

Our sincere thanks to Jesus, our Blessed Mother and Don Bosco for a successful bypass surgery for my loving husband. *Sucurina D'Silva, Mumbai*

Thank you dear Mother Mary for so many favours that have been showered on me by my dear and near one who have cared for me and loved me in ways I could never repay them and especially in these last months. *Mr. Mark W. Dodd, Pune*

Sincere thanks to Mother Mary and Don Bosco for helping me recover from a very critical illness. *Mrs. Nathalina Pereira, Sydney, Australia*

My sincere thanks to Our Lady Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for all the favours and blessings granted to me, especially for the safe delivery and the gift of a healthy normal baby boy. *Coney Kenny, Mumbai*

THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



Many thanks dear St. Dominic Savio for a safe and normal delivery of our baby boy!

Sydney and Lavina Fernandes, Goa

I am sincerely grateful to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the safe delivery of my daughter and her lovely baby girl after nine years. *Agnes, Goa*
We are grateful to Mary Help of Christians, St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for 35 years of togetherness and for blessing us with two devoted sons, loving and caring daughters-in-law and two precious grandsons, Nathan and Calvin.

Mother Mary do continue to bless our home and protect us always.

Bonny and Sally Noronha, Mumbai

Our sincere thanks to our dear Blessed Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for curing my leg and hand.

Sophie Pereira, Mumbai

We are grateful to our Blessed Lord Jesus, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for a safe delivery and a gift of a healthy baby girl and for protecting her from all childhood dangers and keeping her safe under your protection.

Allwyn and Vanita Menezes, Goa

For the many favours and blessings we have received over the years through the powerful intercession of Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio.

Mr. D. George, Thane Dt

I am grateful to Domnic Savio for the safe delivery of my wife Melita and for blessing us with the lovely gift of our Baby Boy. Bless my family always.

Peter Vaz, Goa

Sincere thanks to dear St Dominic Savio for my successful migration to Australia and also for helping me get a job almost immediately after arriving.

A Devotee, Australia

Belated Thank you Domnic Savio for the gift of a healthy baby girl.

Chiara Gomes, Goa

Thank you dear Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for all the favours granted to us. Keep us always under your protection.

Thomas Mendes, Mumbai

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

MARCH 2009

Holy Father's General Intention: *That the role of women may be more appreciated and used to good advantage in every country in the world.*

Missionary Intention: *That, in the light of the letter addressed to them by Pope Benedict XVI, the Bishops, priests, consecrated persons, and lay faithful of the Catholic Church in the Popular Republic of China may commit themselves to being the sign and instrument of unity, communion and peace.*

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MARY WAS THERE

On the 1st of November, 08 my son Neil was kidnapped and assaulted on his way to our residence in Pune. Members in a white car parked nearby got out, hit him several times, pushed him into the car and drove off. They started demanding a ransom. Then started an arduous journey for Neil. Since he did not carry any money at the time, they threatened him with dire consequences and snatched his mobile. While Neil was continuously being beaten and threatened he held the rosary firmly in his left hand. He derived courage when he felt a certain warmth in his hands that held the rosary and this is what saved him on that fateful day.

Fortunately Neil returned home and he was saved from grave consequences because of the rosary and his implicit faith. I thank Mother Mary for bringing Neil safely back to us. *Ossie Harris, Pune*

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

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

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

You can help by establishing a Perpetual Burse with:

Rs 5000/-, 10,000/-, 15,000/- for a boy studying for the priesthood;

But any amount, however small, will be gratefully received.

Send your offerings by Payee cheque or Draft on Mumbai banks;

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Please address everything to:

Rev. Fr. Edwin D'Souza, sdb.,

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