

CONTENTS

From The Editor's Desk: *-Our Homely God*..... 3

5 - Lizardly Love
- *Fr. Erasto Fernandez. SSS*.....4

Mamma Mary, You Were There
- *Cl. Leon Rodrigues, sbd*.....7

Preparing the Heart
- *Michael Paul Gallagher*.....8

Worthy To Receive Communion
- *F.J. Power*.....10

Witnesses In And For Our Times:
Julian of Norwich (May 13)
- *Mario Scudu*.....12

Lectio Divina:
Hail Mary: Mother of God
- *Roberta Fora*.....17

Quietspaces: Jesus' Mother and Ours
- *Davil O'Sullivan*.....18

Family Secrets (7)
- *Helen Morgan*.....20

Don Bosco And the Bible
- *Natale Cerrato*.....23

NewsBits.....26

Reflecting on Mary: Mary - A Help to Start Afresh
- *Donald McDonald SMM*.....29

In a Cheerful Mood.....15

Loving Children to their Loving Mother.....32

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

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

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



*Jesus said
to little John Bosco:
"I will give you a teacher,
under her direction
you will become wise."*

Cover: **The Statue
of Mary Help of Christians
at the Temple of Don Bosco,
Becchi, Northern Italy**



From The Editor's Desk

Our Homely God

When I was growing up most of the families I knew had a room set aside for special occasions. The living room or the drawing room, as it was called, was strictly forbidden to us children. It was always kept spic-and-span, and it contained the finest furniture and the most treasured knick-knacks. Because it was not the room we 'played' in and where we were not supposed to 'loll about,' it held a special attraction for us. And - mostly in the afternoons when the grown-ups were asleep - our occasional secret forays there sometimes bore disastrous results for the treasured knick-knacks!

It was really 'used' only on special occasions: a visit from some long-lost relative or friend, a formal gathering to celebrate some family event, or when the adults wanted to talk about serious matters away from the children. Then the mysterious room would be opened up, the brighter lights would be turned on, the best china would be brought out, and all the family would be on their best behaviour.

I can still remember the consternation caused by a young priest, newly arrived in our parish, when he called to a neighbour's house. When the door was opened he introduced himself to the eldest son, and then, ignoring the drawing room, proceeded to walk straight into the kitchen. There he introduced himself to a horrified mother, surrounded by pots and pans, and babies' nappies, and unwashed pots and pans, and all the mess of a busy household.

Without any formality he sat casually on the edge of the table - probably in the flour she had just been kneading! - and chatted away to the bewildered family. Before long, however, everyone was relaxed, and since he made a custom of introducing himself in this way wherever he went, he became known affectionately as the 'homely priest'. He clearly preferred the messy kitchen to the well tended living room; and who could blame him?

When it comes to prayer, I sometimes think that we have a kind of living room in our hearts, a room specially put aside for God which we never use except when he visits. It is the room where we are on our best behaviour, where we are polite and well spoken, and where we talk about nice things in a slightly stilted and artificial way. It is far removed from the kitchen, that messy part of ourselves where we are confused or worried or angry or simply fed-up.

I think God is like the young priest: when he comes to visit us he prefers the kitchen to the living room. He likes to be brought into the messy reality of our lives. He is completely at home with our worries and complaints. He wants to hear about the pain of being laid-off, or the fear of growing old, or the words that hurt in last night's row. He likes a heart-to-heart chat when he calls. He is a homely God.

Fr. Ian Douulton sdb

5. LIZARDLY LOVE

Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss

This is a true story that reportedly occurred in Japan some years ago. In an attempt to renovate his house, a man broke open the wall of one of the rooms since Japanese houses normally have a hollow space between the wooden walls for fear of sudden earthquakes. To his surprise, he found a lizard alive but stuck within because a nail from outside had been hammered into one of its feet. Filled with pity for the unfortunate creature but at the same time puzzled and curious, he inspected the nail only to discover that it had been nailed ten years back - when the house was first built.

He was astonished to think a lizard could survive in just one position in a dark wall partition without moving for ten long years; this was impossible and mind-boggling! Wondering how this creature could have survived for so long without moving a single step he interrupted his work and instead patiently observed the lizard from a distance. It wasn't long before he found the answer he so eagerly sought: as if out of nowhere he noticed another lizard appear with food in its mouth; lovingly it fed the imprisoned one, waiting by its side till it had finished its meal. He was stunned and touched deeply to think that, responsive to the plight of the nailed lizard, another compassionate companion took upon itself the onerous duty of feeding it for ten torturous years.

Love's Creative Ways

What an inspiring and faithful commitment of love! Love can work

miracles among all of God's creatures! Reading of this example of the two lizards, one cannot but recall St. Paul's hymn to love: "Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends..." (1 Cor 13:4-8). With untiring hope in its partner's eventual release, that insignificant creature lived out a whole life-time's 'sacrifice' with love - which often other creatures blessed with brilliant and inventive minds would not care to offer their very own!

Besides would it be too far-fetched to think that it is the love of its fellow-creature that sustained the 'crucified one' to continue hoping that some day it would be released from its painful imprisonment? Love offered freely, generously and consistently is a rare tonic indeed! It has power to sustain even the most desperate person and see him through the greatest difficulties in life. This seems to have been the secret that inspired Mother Teresa to reach out to dying destitutes with all the love she could muster. Again, didn't Viktor Frankl show us that even concentration camp prisoners could hold on to life with an unbelievable tenacity when they were convinced that someone was out there waiting for their return, or even that they themselves had something significant yet to accomplish? We have all heard

innumerable stories of how someone has held on to life even when in a coma until the loved one arrived and they bid farewell to each other!

Respectful Reflections

A strange unusual story indeed, but what a number of lessons we can learn from it! Much of this 'lizardly love' is instinctive, of course, but aren't human intelligence and free-will much higher gifts than mere instinct? And perhaps because it was instinctive, it lasted for so long; instinct does not reason out that a certain period of selfless service is all that could be asked of anyone in a given case. It just continues to love and hope to the end! We certainly have innumerable examples of such selfless dedication among human beings too as when loving parents look after their mentally or physically challenged children for years on end, or when a brother or sister sacrifices marriage and other normal advancements in life for the sake of a dependent sibling, or when children sacrifice their future for the sake of aged and infirm parents! But the real test is when someone can do the same or more for a total stranger simply because s/he is a child of God beloved and precious to our heavenly Father.

Jesus told us that 'I came that you may have and have it to the full' but he also alerted us to the fact that 'in him was life, and the life was the light of all people' (Jn 1:4). The drive for this fullness of life in and through Jesus is present not only in human beings, but in all creatures, because we are all made in the image of God and in him was life! God is life itself and all that comes from his creative energy must tend

towards life. How much passionate are we about life in all its fullness? This has two dimensions, the first being that each person must foster in himself this thrust towards the fullness of life. It is a question not only of avoiding all that harms life, but equally of fostering all that promotes life in all its fullness. This includes attention given to a proper diet, to regular physical exercise, healthy habits of resting and rising and a host of other things often taken for granted.

Human life does not comprise only the physical aspect. A person fully alive is one who has developed all the various facets or dimensions of human life: intellectual, social, emotional, religious, cultural, financial and the rest. The unspoken trend nowadays is for persons to 'specialize' in only one, or at most two or three, such areas. The wizard at mathematics or some such speculative science could end up being a mere infant emotionally because this area has been totally neglected in the pursuit of intellectual goals. One area which most people tend to neglect, or better, take for granted is the spiritual or mystical. Perhaps they don't find the time to indulge in spiritual activity like meditation and contemplation, reading of spiritual classics or even of poetry, discussions on such matters with others more learned in the field...

The important point is that human beings must see their life's goal as being not mere existence, but a zest for living, the experience of the thrill and joy of being alive on as many fronts as possible. Unfortunately the life-style adopted by many people today militates against such a zest for life. And

paradoxically, this approach is adopted precisely in the name of seeking a fuller life. The majority of people in our big cities spend the greater part of the day in either working at several jobs, one after another, or in commuting to their place of work and back. In their pursuit of money which people imagine will provide them with amenities promoting the fullness of life, they end up being so worn out or having developed ulcers and other debilitating illnesses that they no longer enjoy life, but sadly wait for it to mercifully end their pain and anxiety.

Shared Happiness

The second reflection is that as life unfolds, no one can attain the fullness of life all by oneself – we need to interact and more, network with others who are like-minded. However, here too there is a catch 22: should we first seek our own development and fulfillment and once that has been achieved, then reach out to others, or should we ‘sacrifice’ our own good in order to reach out to others first! Most people choose the first alternative but Jesus recommends the second: he invites us at each Eucharist to join him in saying (and living): ‘My brothers and sisters, take and eat – this is my body (very self) given for you!’ Your needs and expectations come before my own.

While this might seem foolish and self-defeating, yet, doesn’t every mother proclaim and live this truth in relation to her children? Don’t we all admire and praise the mother who sacrifices her sleep, nourishment, personal growth, well-being, future – in fact her very life itself for the sake of her children? Isn’t Mother Teresa admired and

respected by all precisely for this kind of selfless and persistent self-giving? She and her Missionaries of Charity too reach out to the poor unfortunate ones trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty, physical defects, social and racial prejudices and the like. And in doing so, they develop very deep human qualities in themselves, like compassion, tenderness, thoughtfulness of others, forgiveness, acceptance of others in their weakness and so on.

And yet, when it comes to ourselves adopting this selfless life-style towards all others, we tend to feel it is foolish and impractical. What would have been lost if that one lizard trapped in the hollow wall casing had died of starvation? Nothing much, perhaps; but yet we all admire the sense of solidarity, fellowship, self-sacrifice, tenacity, love and a host of other ‘virtues’ in the second lizard that felt it simply had to come to the rescue of its companion! Our reaching out to the deformed, underprivileged, marginalized and outcasts will certainly not eradicate these evils for as Jesus reminded us: ‘You will always have the poor with you!’ But our efforts would certainly make a difference to the ones we reach out to! For them at least, life will be a little more worth living. And in their turn, they too would possibly reach out to still others, thus maintaining the chain of selfless good deeds in a world engulfed by selfishness and greed.

Help is an act, do it, let it go.

Love is a gift, accept it, let it flow.

Patience is a sign we should wear, exercise it, let it show.

A human being is not just a spineless self-seeking individual, but a spark of divine love – let all scoffers know! ■



MAMA MARY, YOU WERE THERE

Cl. Leon Rodrigues, sdb

Student Cleric at Divyadaan, Institute of Philosophy, Nashik

As far back as I can remember my mama kept insisting that even before I was conceived our Lady had appeared to her in a dream and told her that she would be blessed with a baby boy. Somehow I thought my mother just said that to get me to be devoted to the Blessed Mother. My mama was a Marian soul but I really was not!

As years rolled by I still seemed to be far away from Mamma Mary. I hardly even realized that it was she who was interceding for me with her Son who had a special plan for me. I believe it was she who infused in me the Salesian Vocation. When I came close to her I told her that I could not understand all this: I had gotten to become the captain of the interschool hockey team and I secured an unusual 80% (quite a miracle!) in my annual exams. So like an obedient boy I listened to her and went to the junior seminary. It is there that I began to develop a childlike affection for Mary, the mother of Jesus. I would be brimming over with love at my triumphs and she consoled me with her motherly tenderness when I was depressed and alone. Now, when I look back I can say with some certainty that there were numerous occasions when I sensed her by my side never letting me tread through life's troubled waters alone. She always bore me up in her tender arms...she was always there.

Trusting her, I began to take the first steps in following my vocation knowing that I could count on this "special someone" to guide me. My pre-novitiate experience among the lush green coconut groves of Kudal made me aware that I was being called for a purpose but during the



serenity of my novitiate at Nashik my father died tragically. On several occasions I dared to ask myself: *'why do you still persevere? What makes you go on?'* It was her hand that kept leading me on, showing me the way ahead. Somewhere deep inside me she was calling and telling me to face all the troubles, surmount the barriers and forge ahead through the trials and tribulations. She kept comforting and caring for me.

I feel I have now become a Marian soul, always attentive to where our Lady leads me. I have promised that I would go wherever the Lord sends me. I feel so assured by Mary's amazing love. To her I pray: *I know that I will be forever yours and you will be mine, my dear Mother, my guide, my comfort and my solace! Thank you for being there, caring and leading me toward my life's goal as a Salesian priest of Don Bosco to further his mission for the salvation of the young.* □

For further details contact Fr Brian Moras sdb: frbrian@rediffmail.com

Preparing the Heart

by Michael Paul Gallagher

In this hectic and noisy world of today many people feel a longing for moments of quiet prayer in their lives, when they can be simply present to God. Still, such prayer can often seem to be impossibly difficult. In this series Fr. Gallagher shows how quiet prayer is possible for everyone - including you.

Dear Liz and Brian,

You ask me about prayer, and you ask me to tell you something of my own prayer. Well, to begin with, I try to pray every day. But some days I only go through the motions. I imagine you know the experience, because you say you've both been putting some time aside for prayer each day for some months now. I think that's marvellous, and it's all the greater because you are trying it as a couple.

Sure, your individual experiences will be different, but there is huge support in the fact that you are both committed to some daily space for prayer. I love the idea that sometimes you do it together, just sitting in silence in the same place. 'Even if it is only ten minutes,' you add. But ten minutes is ten minutes, and it mounts up day by day. Some days, as I say, can seem to be total failures: you're just there, without focus, and it ends up seeming empty.

Patience with Yourself

I've come to the conclusion that how I start off within the first few minutes is crucial. It will influence the whole period of prayer. In this letter I want to tell you a few of my discoveries about this business of getting started properly.

It's like someone learning to drive a car: at first it's always awkward and jerky, coordinating the brake

and the gears and the accelerator. But then you get used to it, and it becomes second nature. I'm not sure whether these little helps for prayer ever become second nature as driving does. But they are like the initial moves you make to get under way.

The first ingredient you need, I think, is patience with yourself, because often it takes time to reach the quiet level of listening that is the key to personal prayer. Don't be surprised if you find yourself 'all over the place' when you try to be still.

Prayer sometimes reminds me of those water containers with snow scenes inside that used to be popular around Christmas-time. The flakes would fly about everywhere when you shook the jar. But after a time they would settle again. The beginning of prayer often needs some patience before quiet comes.

Skills of Stillness

There are many useful ways of helping to create this quiet if it does not arrive naturally. So my second ingredient would involve a few skills of stillness, but with the warning, as on a medicine: not to be used unless needed. Prayer can often come naturally. You can sometimes enter a simple sense of being in the presence of God. If so, you don't need these props or

helps. But for the times when everything seems chaotic inside, what can be done?

This is where you need patience with yourself, as well as some practical helps towards inner quiet. You have heard of some of these already. They usually involve focusing one's attention on one small area, letting that become a kind of anchor for the scattered self. Some people are helped by paying attention to the sensation of their hands – just the touch, with its strange variety of hot and cool. Try it with your eyes closed, coming back again and again if the distraction continues.

It sound ridiculous, but it works! It's like that moment in the Old Testament when Naaman came to the prophet Elisha to be cured of his leprosy. When he was told to wash himself in the river, at first he refused: It was too simple. This 'Naaman complex' can rob you of the humility to try such an easy remedy as the one suggested. Give it a chance. Give it at least five minutes.

Of course there are other possible anchors for your attention. Some people listen to sounds. Or gaze at a candle or a picture. Others pay attention to their breathing, not thinking about it but simply feeling its movement.

In fact that last one can gently become a prayer, an expression of gratitude as you breathe in and surrender as you breathe out.

A very traditional approach to the same goal of quiet is the repetition of a word or a phrase – for example, the name Jesus. Or else you can use a line from a prayer or psalm: 'To you I lift up my soul.' Patiently, slowly, gently any of these things (but just one of them) can help you to arrive at a better level of listening,

and so prepare the heart for deeper prayer.

God of Welcomes

I've spent so long on this business of gathering the self into stillness that I haven't much space left in this letter for the other main point I want to make. So far everything has been about us, about how to be ready for prayer. But prayer involves God. *How do you think of God to whom you come in prayer?* That's a most important question, I think.

Some years ago Fr. Anthony de Mello wrote about prayer. He had his own striking way of putting things. He asked people what God they prayed to. Is God sulky? He asked. Is he someone who turns away in bad humour because you have been less than perfect in your relationship? De Mello contrasted this God with what he called the *God of Welcomes*.

I can still remember him describing God getting excited like a child because you are coming to pray. God has all these angels, said de Mello, with golden trumpets. They are to get ready to welcome you. God has this infinite red carpet rolled out for you. And de Mello ended by challenging his readers: 'You think my pictures are silly and childish? I tell you, they are much truer than the images you may have, especially if you have some picture in the back of your head of a distant and bored and sulky God.'

Get yourselves ready patiently. But remember the true God of love to whom you come. Then, some days at least, those ten minutes of yours can flow naturally and easily, and most important of all, 'leave you strengthened for a life of love. Until till next time, God bless. □

walking with the Church



The Spanish Inquisition, Virgin Birth, Sin, Lourdes and the Apparitions

by St. Martin's Messenger, Ireland

Q. *If the Catholic Church is the true Church, why did they torture and burn people to death during the Spanish Inquisition?*

A. The Spanish Inquisition was established in 1478 by Pope Sixtus IV to root out those who converted to Christianity for political or social reasons rather than for spiritual reasons. It was suppressed in 1834. No one denies its reputation for cruelty including torture and execution. It rightly stands condemned for that, but that does not disprove our belief in the fact that the Catholic Church is the Church founded by Christ. It proves only that the Church is a Church of saints and sinners and indeed that some sinners, over the centuries, have reached high positions in the Church. Remember Peter, the first Pope, denied Christ. It shows also that otherwise good people can lose their balance and in an excess of zeal for their Christian beliefs, act in a seriously un-Christian way.

Q. *A friend of mine is convinced that Mary lost her virginity when she gave birth our Divine Lord. Could you please help?*

A. The Virgin Birth of Christ means that Mary conceived her son Jesus through the power of the

Holy Spirit without the intervention of a human father. The teaching of the Catholic Church based on the gospels is that Jesus was conceived in this way. The fact that Jesus was born of a woman points to his humanity and the fact that he was conceived through a special intervention of the Holy Spirit points to his divinity. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (496) states '...Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary...Jesus was conceived by the holy Spirit without human seed.' And in (496) states "the gospel accounts understand the virginal conception of Jesus as a divine work that surpasses all human understanding and possibility."

Q. *I seem to be always failing in charity and in sins against the sixth commandment. At times I feel like giving up, that there is no point in trying to live the Christian life. I am forever falling no matter how often I go to confession or receive Holy Communion.*

A. The above is a short resume of your letter. I think everyone of our readers will understand your feelings of discouragement. Each

of us can point to a particular area in our own lives where we seem to be forever failing – whether it be in charity or patience, selfishness or laziness or a lack of interest in prayer etc. We all experience failure and the temptation for many is to throw in the towel and to give up all efforts at living the Christian life.

But we should not be discouraged when we do not stop sinning, or when we repeatedly experience our weakness. Jesus does not expect us to be perfect. What he wants of us and expects of us is that we persevere in trying. He looks for effort not for results. Our growth in the spiritual life is slow. Jesus compares growth in the spiritual life to the growth of a seed. The seed of God's kingdom within us grows slowly, almost without us noticing it – just like a seed in the ground. In other words, even though God calls us to perfection we cannot and will not become perfect overnight (perfection will only come when we see God) and we are unlikely to see the growth in our lives when it does happen. Parents do not see their children growing before their eyes – they realize they have grown when their clothes no longer fit them. We don't see a person aging as we watch.

We should never give up hope of union with Christ or give up trying because our path to being better people seems so slow and we do not seem to be making any progress. You are in our prayers.

Q. *Our Lady is reported to have appeared at many places in the world, Lourdes being the most famous of these. My question is (1) are people cured at these places and (2) why are*



people asked to do penance and to pray so much?

A. Miracles have been reported at many of the Shrines to Our Lady around the world. Lourdes is exceptional in that the Catholic Church has officially recognized 76 miracles and 7000 inexplicable cures at Lourdes since the Blessed Virgin appeared there in 1858. All of these were analyzed scientifically before being accepted as cures.

Prayer and penance are an integral part of a good Christian life and are mentioned in many of the places where Our Lady is reported to have appeared. This follows on Our Lord's repeated mention of the need for prayer and penance in our lives. □

Witnesses in & for Our Times



JULIAN OF NORWICH (13 May) JESUS OUR MOST TENDER MOTHER

*1342-1430, English Mystic, not officially declared a saint
by Mario Scudu*

This is a revelation of love which Jesus Christ, our endless bliss, made in sixteen showings (c. 1). This revelation was made to a simple, unlettered creature, living in this mortal flesh, the year of our Lord one thousand, three hundred and seventy-three, on the thirteenth day of May (Friday) (c.2)...

This creature had desired three graces by the gift of God. The first was recollection of the Passion. The second was bodily sickness. The third was to have, of God's gift, three wounds... I desired some feeling for the Passion of Christ, but still I desired to have more by the grace of God. (c. 2)

The Trinity is Our Joy

When I was thirty and a half years old, God sent me a bodily sickness in which I lay for three days and three nights, and on the third night I received all the rites of Holy Church, and did not expect to live until day. And after this I lay for two days and two nights, and on the third night I often thought that I was on the point of death, and those who were with me often thought so. And yet in this I felt a great reluctance to die, not that there was anything on earth which it pleased me to live for,



but it was because I wanted to live to love God better and longer... (c. 3)

In the first revelation I saw the red blood running down from under the crown, hot and flowing freely and copiously, a living stream... **I perceived, truly and powerfully, that it was he who just so, both God and man, himself suffered for me, who showed it to me without any intermediary. In**

the same revelation, suddenly the Trinity filled my heart full of the greatest joy, and I understood that it will be so in heaven without end to all who will come there (c. 4)...

In the fourteenth showing she understood **Jesus is our true Mother in nature by our first creation, and he is our true Mother in grace by his taking our created nature** (c. 59). **A mother can give her child to suck of her milk, but our precious Mother Jesus can feed us with himself, and does, most courteously and most tenderly with the blessed Sacrament, which is the precious food of true life...** (c. 60)

You Desire to See My Mother?

In the eleventh showing our Good Lord reminded me where the Madonna was at the moment of his passion. "Do you wish to see her? And these sweet words were as if he had said, **"I know well that you wish to see my blessed mother, for after myself she is the greatest joy that I could show you, and the greatest delight and honour to me, and she is what all my blessed creatures most desire to see."** (c. 25)

Learn that The Lord is Love

God revealed to me that Sin is the sharpest scourge with which any chosen soul can be struck, which scourge belabours man or woman, and breaks a man, and purges him in his own sight... **Our good Lord**

protects us with the greatest of loving care when it seems to us that we are almost forsaken and abandoned because of our sins. For our courteous Lord does not want his servants to despair because they fall often and grievously; for our falling does not hinder him in loving us. He wants us to take heed that he is the foundation of our whole life in love, and furthermore that he is our everlasting protector... (c. 39)

I greatly marvelled at this last showing. In love he protects us, and never allows us to be hurt, by which our bliss might be decreased. And therefore when the judgment is given, and we are all brought up above, we shall then clearly see in God the mysteries which are now hidden from us. And then shall none of us be moved to say in any matter: Lord, if it had been so, it would have been well. But we shall all say with one voice: Lord blessed may you be, because it is so, it is well; and now we see truly that everything is done as it was ordained by you before anything was made. (c. 85)

From the time that it was revealed, I desired many times to know in what was our Lord's meaning. And fifteen years after and more, I was answered in spiritual understanding... And in this love he has done all his works, and in this love he has made all things profitable to us, and in this love our life is everlasting. In this love we have our beginning, and all this shall we see in God without end. Thanks be to God. (c. 86) □

Who is Julian of Norwich?

She was born c. 1342 and died in Norwich, England, c. 1423; she has never actually been beatified.

Among the English mystics none is greater than the Lady Julian, who lived near Norwich,

England, in a three-roomed hermitage in the churchyard of Conisford. Absolutely nothing is known of her life before becoming an anchorite. In fact, we do not even know her name; she has been given the name of the church

where she had her cell. An old English historian writes: "In 1393, Lady Julian, the anchoress here was a strict recluse, and had two servants to attend her in her old age. This woman was in these days esteemed one of the greatest holiness."

She lived in an age of startling and confusing contrasts. It was the time of the Black Death, the Peasants' Revolt, Piers Plowman and Wat Tyler, when the old social patterns were breaking down. But none of this is reflected in her quiet and retired life or in the pages of her spiritual autobiography, *Revelations of Divine Love*, which is the most sublime of all expositions of its kind in English. Her masterpiece encompasses the love of God, the Incarnation, redemption, sin, penance, and divine consolation.

"These revelations," she writes, "were shown to a simple creature unlettered, the year of our Lord 1373, the eighth day of May." She desired above all to know the suffering of our Lord — what she called "the mind of His Passion" — and that nothing might stand between herself and God. She tells us that when at the age of 30 she was at the point of death and the curate was sent for to administer the last rites, "he set the Cross before my face and said: 'I have brought you the Image of thy Maker and Savior: Look thereupon and comfort yourself with it.'"

She spent the next 20 years meditating upon the 16 revelations that followed in a state of ecstasy, of Christ's Passion and the Trinity. She saw the red blood flow from

under the Crown of Thorns; she saw the Virgin, a young and simple maid; she saw our Lord a 'homely loving.' Then God showed her a little thing — a hazel nut in the palm of her hand. She thought: what may this be? and was answered: "It is all that is made. God shaped it. God gave it life. God maintains it."

Thus, she learned the goodness of God, in which is our highest prayer and which "comes down to our lowest need." And still regarding the Crucifix, she saw the stream of God's mercy falling like showers of rain, and looked upon the tokens of His Passion. She saw our Lord dying and underwent the torments and agony of His suffering. "And thus I saw Him, and sought Him; I had Him and I wanted Him." It seemed, she said, as if He were seven nights dying, so outdrawn was His anguish, suffering the last pain, seven nights dead, continually dying, in a cold dry wind. "Thus was I taught to choose Jesus for my Heaven, whom I saw only in pain at that time . . . to choose only Jesus in good times and bad. . . . He shall make all well that is not well. . . . Prayer unites the soul to God."

In this way, this remarkable book pursues its course, full of deep insight and feeling: "In Christ our two natures are united." "Our soul can never have rest in things that are beneath itself." "God can do all that we need." "I knew well that while I beheld in the Cross I was surely safe." And its last word is: "Love was our Lord's meaning." At the time of her death she had a far-spread reputation for sanctity, which attracted visitors from all over England to her cell (Benedictines: Delaney, Gill). □

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Ol' Spot

A group of country neighbors wanted to get together on a regular basis and socialize. As a result, about 10 couples formed a dinner club and agreed to meet for dinner at a different neighbours' house each month.

When it came time for Jimmy and Susie Brown to have the dinner at their house, like many women, Susie wanted to outdo all the others and prepare a meal that was the best that any of them had ever lapped a lip over.

A few days before the big event, Susie got out her cookbook and decided to have mushroom smothered steak. When she went to the store to buy some mushrooms, she found the price for a small can was more than she wanted to pay. She then told her husband, "We aren't going to have mushrooms, because they are too expensive."

He said, "Why don't you go down in the pasture and pick some of those mushrooms? There are plenty of them right in the creek bed."

She said, "No, I don't want to do that, because I have heard that wild mushrooms are poison."

He then said, "I don't think so. I see the varmints eating them all the time and it never has affected them."

After thinking about this, Susie decided to give this a try and got in the pickup and went down in the pasture and picked some.

She brought the wild mushrooms back home and washed them, sliced and diced them to get them ready to go over her smothered steak. Then she went out on the back porch and got Ol' Spot's (the yard dog) bowl and gave him a double handful. She even put some bacon grease on them to make them tasty.

Ol' Spot didn't slow down until he had eaten every bite. All morning long, Susie watched him and the

wild mushrooms didn't seem to affect him, so she decided to use them.

The meal was a great success, and Susie even hired a lady from town to come out and help her serve. She had on a white apron and a little cap on her head. It was first class.

After everyone had finished, they all began to kick back and relax and socialize. The men were visiting and the women started to gossip a bit.

About this time, the lady from town came in from the kitchen and whispered in Susie's ear. She said, "Mrs. Brown, Spot just died."

With this news, Susie went into hysterics. After she finally calmed down, she called the doctor and told him what had happened.

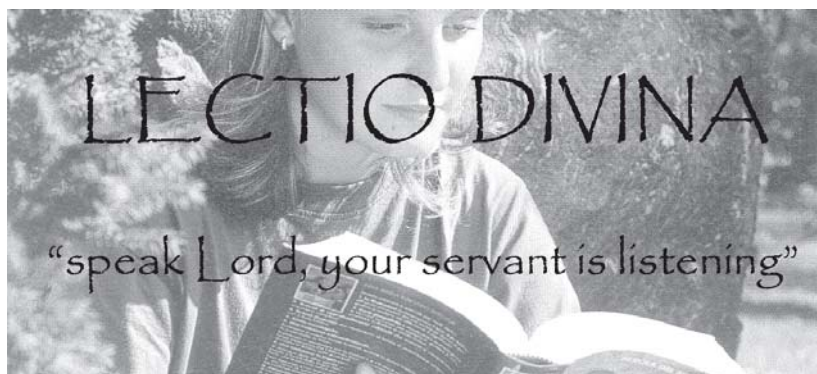
The doctor said, "It's bad, but I think we can take care of it. I will call for an ambulance and I will be there as quick as I can get there. We will pump out everyone's stomach and everything will be fine. Just keep them all there and keep them calm."

It wasn't long until they could hear the wail of the siren as the ambulance was coming down the road.

When they got there, the EMTs got out with their suitcases and a stomach pump and the doctor arrived shortly thereafter. One by one, they took each person into the master bedroom and pumped out their stomachs.

After the last one was finished, the doctor came out and said, "I think everything will be fine now, and he left."

They were all looking pretty peaked sitting around the living room, and about this time, the town lady came in and said, "You know, that fellow that ran over Ol' Spot never even stopped." □



'MOTHER OF GOD'

by Roberta Fora

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

As soon as Mary entered the house of Zachariah she greeted her cousin Elizabeth who was pregnant. Her cousin was filled with the Holy Spirit and turned to her and exclaimed: *Why should this great thing happen to me, that my Lord's mother comes to visit me? For as soon as I heard your greeting, the baby within me jumped with gladness. How happy you are to believe that the Lord's message to you will come true!* (cf. Luke 1, 43-45)

At that moment Elizabeth demonstrated her great faith. She did not welcome her cousin with a normal gesture of affection as befitting a relative but with a demonstration of deep respect acknowledging that she was "the mother of the Lord."

Mary is the Mother of Christ because God chose her to bring



into the world his most beloved Son, but she is also "the mother of all peoples," a mother who is



*A detail from "the
dream at the age of 9"
by Mario Bogani
at the Temple of Don
Bosco, Becchi*

thoughtful, affectionate and very special to every creature that exists in this world.

It is so wonderful and comforting to become aware of this extraordinary and very precious presence so close to each of us.

Mary, the Mother of God and our mother in heaven mysteriously watches over life's journey praying and interceding with the Father.

At times in the hectic pace of our lives, it is easy to forget this

marvelous gift of God as our lives that flit by and we don't even spare a thought to greet Mary.

We will try, from now on, at least to perceive the Madonna as our "Mother," because our most common mistake is to consider her a "divine being," worthy of respect and devotion and that puts her very far from our human experience and totally detached from our daily ordinary lives.

Don Bosco taught us to call her a "helper" and a "help of Christians." He wants to say that in order to help us to face the obstacles on our journey and to accept the large and small crosses of our lives we have an effective weapon, the strength of the Holy Spirit through the assistance of Mary. She is a great and powerful help because she is so close to God and she constantly praises him abandoning herself completely to his plan for her life.

We pray you, O Lord to help us know and discover the maternal presence of Mary in our lives.

We need to know that we have a "heavenly mother" who protects consoles, encourages and helps us in times of difficulty when we would rather give up, especially when we are tempted to give up our faith.

O Mary, guard us from heaven and help us to discover the beauty of life.

We journey each day knowing that we have by our side "such a special mother" who helps us to live our lives to the full, cherishing every gift the Lord showers on us in his immense goodness. □

DEDICATED TO
MARY OUR MOTHER

Quiet

JESUS' MOTHER

by David O

Some years ago, while studying French with an international group of students news arrived that the father of one of the students – a priest from Brazil – had died. That was bad enough. It was made worse by the fact that the death had taken place a number of days earlier. Thus, as well as grief at his father's death, this Brazilian priest had the added pain of not being able to share the bereavement with his family.

Naturally everybody tried to support and comfort him at that difficult time. I was particularly struck by the gesture of a Spanish student later that day. As we came down the stairs this student quietly moved towards the sorrowing priest, and put his arm around his shoulders. It was a warm, human expression of compassion and support.

Mary's Qualities

This story illustrates for me some of the qualities of Mary. Like her, the Spanish student noticed another in need, and responded warmly and genuinely. Like her, his response was simple, kind and compassionate. Like her, too, his gesture was a way of sharing in the other person's grief.

In May we celebrate in prayer Mary as Mother of the Church and of all humankind. We reflect on her care, her warmth and her compassion. Above all, by understanding how Mary was with Jesus we can understand a little better how she is now with us, for we too are her sons and daughters.

A Welcome for Jesus

First of all, Mary welcomed Jesus into her life, even though initially she was deeply troubled, and did not understand. None the less, she was ready to believe and to be filled with wonder and joy at God's message to her.

Her joy was active, and found expression in rushing off to see her cousin Elizabeth, and in her wonderful song when they met. Mary kept this sense of wonder as she followed her son throughout his life.



ER AND OURS

'Sullivan

Responding to Jesus

Another special quality we see in Mary is her ability to respond to Jesus in a way appropriate to each stage of his development and to each situation in life. When he was an infant she looked after him. As a boy she didn't fear to question him after he had gone missing in the Temple. As a young man she encouraged and challenged him at the wedding feast at Cana. In other words, Mary was a real mother to her Son, nurturing, questioning, encouraging and challenging him as the situation demanded and her love prompted.

We should not be surprised that Mary acted like that in her relationship with her Son, even though that Son was the Son of God. Indeed it would seem strange for any mother never to have experienced difficulty or puzzlement in her relationship with a son or daughter. Many parents – perhaps most – experience their children as both a great joy and a real and profound challenge.

We can be sure that Mary experienced all of this with Jesus, especially when we see her standing at the foot of the cross. She shared in her heart the sorrow and anguish of her Son's death: yet she also somehow respected, accepted and trusted.

Mary in Glory

Having shared in his sufferings, Mary later came to share Jesus' glory and the joy of his resurrection. The Mary we pray to now is this Mary in glory: the one who responded openly and joyfully to God's invitation in her own life, and who followed her Son in his mission, even when it came to accepting his death. She herself has experienced all aspects of human life and still remains present to us.

She is present in welcome and in motherly joy. She is present as one who cares and nurtures, as one who questions and guides, as one who encourages and challenges. She is present in our joys and in our sorrows, at our Canas and at our Calvarys. We can draw courage and hope from her example of companionship, guidance and prayer. □



Family Secrets

Helen Morgan

The Story So Far:

Sarah Williams, aged 26, 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 her mother's first baby, Catherine, who died at birth following which her mother had had a hysterectomy. The realization that she is adopted leads her to break off her engagement to Jonathan. While searching her family home for her adoption papers she finds a sealed box in the attic.

Disappointment enveloped Sarah when she opened the box and found nothing inside

except baby clothes. She was sure it would contain her adoption papers. She picked up the tiny pink dress and looked at the label. Age 12-18 months, it read.

As she emptied the contents onto the floor, a small yellowed newspaper photo of a baby fell out from underneath one of the cardboard flaps at the bottom of the box. She picked it up and turned it over. On the reverse side the letters 'OL EC' were all that remained of the newspaper's title.

She replaced the items in the box and took it downstairs with her. She decided to ask Kevin for advice.

Since her return to Kingsborough, her mother's family had all been in touch. They assured her that she was still part of the family and was always welcome in Killpatrick. Kevin rang regularly to make sure she was all right now that Jonathan was no longer around.

When he next rang, Sarah told him about the box and its

contents. 'You probably won a baby contest but it would be useful to trace the source of the photo one way or the other,' he said.

'I am flying to London this evening to cover the British general election. I will ring you as soon as I have the address of my hotel and you can send it to me there.'

'Why don't you come up to Kingsborough for a visit while you're in England?' Sarah suddenly asked on impulse. She was tired of her own company and there was nobody she would like to see more than Kevin.

'Thanks. I would like that,' he replied.

'Let me know when you're coming and I will meet you at the station,' she told him.

'I look forward to seeing you then,' he said warmly.

'Hold on to the photo until I arrive.'



Kevin's brief visit to Kingsborough was a success. He was interested in hearing all about her parents whom he remembered from childhood, while Sarah found it therapeutic to share her burden with someone else. She felt as if she had known him all her life.

Relaxed in Kevin's company, the strain of the last few months began to tell on Sarah and she suddenly collapsed in tears.

'Why are these awful things happening to me, Kevin?' she asked helplessly.

'Things happen to people all the time, Sarah. Everyone gets their turn,' he replied kindly.

'But why now? Just when I had

my whole future planned,' she asked.

'I can remember asking myself the same question once,' he said quietly as though his thoughts were far away.

'You, Kevin?' she asked surprised.

'Yes, me,' he replied before continuing.

'Eight years ago I was engaged to be married. Clare was a nurse in Killpatrick Hospital and I was a reporter on the *Killpatrick Times*. We were very much in love.'

'What happened?' asked Sarah, interested.

'A couple of months after our engagement, Clare was diagnosed with acute leukaemia. She was buried on what should have been our wedding day.'

'That's awful, Kevin. How did you cope?' asked Sarah, deeply moved by what she had just heard.

'I went to pieces. Like you, I asked myself over and over again, why me? I started to drink heavily to deaden the pain. It was Aunt Kate who helped me to sort myself out.'

'*There are no answers in the bottom of a bottle*, she told me firmly. She explained that it was Clare's time to go and that I would have to accept that. *God's ways are not ours*, she said. Shortly afterwards, I moved to London to work for the *Daily Mail*, and two years after that I became a foreign correspondent reporting on war and famine in the Third World.

'For a long time after Clare died, I didn't care whether I lived or died but when I saw the suffering in those underprivileged countries, I realized that my problem was small by comparison. The answer to why

me suddenly came out of the blue one day. Why not me? Three years ago I returned to Ireland, finally reconciled with the past. I was offered a job with the *Irish Times* as a European correspondent.



Sarah was taken aback by Kevin's revelation but was pleased that he had trusted her enough to share a very painful part of his life with her. She felt much closer to him now. It was as if their friendship had moved to a deeper level.

'It will get better, Sarah, I promise you,' said Kevin as he hugged her before boarding the train for London.

'I will get back to you as soon as I can on the photo.'

A week later Kevin rang. 'Sarah, I'm on my way to Kingsborough now,' he told her. 'I will be with you in a couple of hours. I now know the background to the photo but it's not something we can discuss over the phone.'

Fear shot through Sarah like an electric charge. What dreadful secret had Kevin uncovered?

To be continued

Of a Mother Only

by F.J. Sheed

The Human nature of Christ was not simply a human body animated by a human soul, thus possessing all that the definition of a man requires, suddenly appearing among us. He actually belongs to us. His soul was a direct and individual creation of the Blessed Trinity, just like your soul and my soul; but by His body He was conceived of a human mother, just as you and I.

Of a human mother, notice, but not of a human father. In the sense in which other human beings have a mother and father, He had a mother only. The bodies of other human beings result from the action of an element supplied by their father upon an element supplied by their mother. In the case of Our Lord the effect upon the female element normally produced by the male was produced simply by a creative act of the will of God. Thus He is a member of Adam's race on His mother's side; He is a Jew on His mother's side but not upon His father's side; for in the order of human generation He had no father. He was descended from Adam as we all are, but not as much as we all are. None of us derived our souls from Adam, but we all derived our bodies from Adam; whereas He derived His body from Adam only as to part. It follows that we are all related to Him-through her, and only through her: we are all His maternal relations, His mother's people. □



Don Bosco: The Times, The Man, The Facts

DON BOSCO'S "GOOD-NIGHT"

by Natale Cerrato (T/A:ID)

One evening, saddened by a certain general unruliness among the boarders at the Oratory he began as usual to say a few words after night prayers. There was a moment of silence as he ascended the little pulpit at the corner of the porticos from where he began to give his youngsters his so-called "good night" which consisted of a brief talk. He looked around and said:

-I am not satisfied with you! Then without allowing them to kiss his hand (a customary mark of respect



The little pulpit that Don Bosco ascended each evening each evening for the "Good Night"

to a priest) he would slowly walk away toward the stairs leading to his room without saying word. Stifled sobs could be heard while tears ran down many faces as all went to bed sorrowful and pensive. To them, offending Don Bosco was the same as offending God. (cf EBM 4, 394)

The Sound of Evening

The Salesian Fr. Giovanni Gnolfo, in his study: *La "Buona Notte" di Don Bosco*, (the "Good Night" of Don Bosco) makes note that the during the day there is life and activity but in the evening instead, is the time to sow in the minds of the young a thought that will bloom within during their sleep. And like a refrain he recalls in Dantesque fashion: "*The sound of the evening*"

It is already time to turn to rest
Like sailors turning to shore...
Dante describes "Purgatory"

exactly like an evening prayer. In fact, in the Eighth Canto he describes the king and his valet singing the hymn at the beginning of the night prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours: *Now at the daylight's ending* (Te lucis ante terminum).

The "Good Night" of Don Bosco was a dear and sublime moment! It began with the hymn and night prayer and concluded with his words spurred the boys to reflection, to joy and to hope. He really looked forward to this evening encounter with his entire Valdocco community. Fr. G. B. Lemoyne states that its origin goes back to Mamma Margaret. When she tucked into bed that first orphan of Valsesia she gave him some advice. From there this beautiful practice of saying a few words to the youngsters before sending them to sleep had gone on to all the Salesian institutions (cf. EBM, 141-142). Fr. E. Ceria, in reporting the words said by the saint recalling the first days of the Oratory, "*I began to give a short talk after evening prayers*" (MO,205), believes that this practice was the direct initiative of Don Bosco. However, if Fr. Lemoyne accepted the testimony of some of the first boys then he thought that the "Good Night" of Mamma Margaret responds emblematically to the purpose for which Don Bosco introduced this custom (cf. *Annali* 3,857).

Characteristics of the "Good Night"

A characteristic of the "Good Night" of Don Bosco was what he spoke about: an actual fact, something real that had taken place and that created a certain feeling of suspense, arousing in his listeners some questions. At times

he questioned himself, establishing a dialogue that enthralled everyone.

Some other characteristics were the varied issues that he treated with brevity so as to avoid monotony and consequent boredom his listeners. However, Don Bosco was not always brief, especially when he narrated his famous dreams or of the trips he had just returned from. Not normally his little talk lasted just a few minutes.

In short, he never preached nor did he treat on academic subjects but said just a few affectionate words like a good father to his children before sending them to bed.

There were some exceptions to the rule that naturally created a great impression, such as what happened on the evening of 16th September 1867. After the superiors had tried every means to correct some youngsters they were incorrigible and a source of scandal to their companions.

Don Bosco ascended the little pulpit and began with a quotation from the Gospel the passage where our Divine Savior pronounces those terrible words against those who scandalize youngsters. He recounted the serious warnings that he had given repeatedly to those who were causing this scandal and all they had benefited from this institution, the fatherly affection that they were surrounded with and then he went on:

"These people think they are not known but I know who they are and I could name them publicly. If I don't name them, you will think I don't really know them... If I could name they I could say: You are A... (he would say the full name) a wolf who roams among his companions and draws them away from the superior, ridiculing their advice... You are B... a thief who steals the innocence of his companions... You are

C... a murderer who has certain pamphlets, certain books, stealing Mary's children from her side... You are D... a demon who spoils his companions by sneering at the sacraments and preventing them from frequenting them."

Don Bosco would calmly name them and each time he took a name there was a smothered cry from the guilty who was one singled out in the dark silence.

The following morning they were ordered to leave the house. Those who remained changed their lives. The "good father" Don Bosco was truly a gentleman! And exceptions of this kind confirm the rule of his "Good Night."

The Key To morality

It was not for nothing that one day in 1875 Don Bosco surprised that there should never be any trouble at the Oratory such as sometimes occurred in other schools where it was often impossible to control the boys. But these visitors did not

know the secrets of the Oratory and among them was this: "Another powerful means of persuasion, exercising a good influence over the boys, was the short fatherly talks addressed to them every evening after prayers. These short talks forestalled any trouble" (EBM 11, 203-204).

And in his precious document *The Preventive System in the Education of the Young* he wrote that the "Good Night" of the Rector of the House was meant to be "the key of morality, smooth running and of a successful education" (cf. The Constitutions of the Society of St. Francis of Sales)

Don Bosco trained his boys to live between two solemn moments in their day and they were far apart. In the morning it was the Eucharist, because the fervour of youngsters needed to be stirred and in the evening the "evening prayer" and the "Good Night" so that before they retired they could reflect and be inspired by certain values during the night. □



NEWSBITS



VATICAN CITY -The Vatican announced its final approval on Feb 21 for the canonisation of Blessed Damien de Veuster (photo), a Belgian-born missionary priest who served patients with Hansen's disease on the Hawaiian island of Molokai more than a century ago.

Pope Benedict XVI authorized the publication of a decree recognising a miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Damien last July, clearing the way for his canonisation.

The Vatican said on Feb 16 that an "ordinary public consistory" - a meeting of the pope with cardinals resident in Rome and invited bishops and other dignitaries - would be held on Feb 21 to finalise the approval of 10 canonisations, including Blessed Damien's.

The dates for the canonization ceremonies have already been announced after the consistory.

Blessed Damien was a 19th-century missionary, a member of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Born in

1840, he spent the last 16 years of his life caring for patients with Hansen's disease, or leprosy, on Molokai.

Blessed Damien died in 1889 and was beatified in 1995.

The miracle attributed to Blessed Damien involves the 1999 healing of Audrey Horner Toguchi, a Hawaiian who had been diagnosed with cancer. She had a tumour and other tissue removed and underwent radiation; when new tumours were found on her lungs, she decided to pray to Blessed Damien instead of undergoing the chemotherapy her doctors recommended. The lung tumours gradually shrunk and disappeared altogether. (*cf. DBM August 2008*)

In his message for World Leprosy Day 2009, Mexican Cardinal Javier Lozano Barragan called Blessed Damien "a lighthouse of faith and love."

Cardinal Lozano, president of the Pontifical Council for Health Care Ministry, said the soon-to-be saint is "the symbol of all those consecrated to Christ with religious vows who still today dedicate their lives to such people" as those struck with Hansen's disease. *CNS*

MANAMA -Bahrain will donate a plot of land to build a new Catholic church in the country. The decision by King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa (photo) comes in response to II a request Pope Benedict XVI made to the Gulf State when its new ambassador presented his credentials last Dec 18.

"Everyone is aware today that



because of the rising number of Catholics, it would be desirable for them to have more places of worship," the pope said during the audience with Naser Muhamed Youssef Al-Belooshi, first representative of the Arab kingdom to the Vatican.

About 80 percent of the 800,000 people living in the country are Muslim (60 percent Sunni and 20 percent Shia). Catholics represent about 10 percent, mostly foreign workers from Asian nations.

Bahrain became the first country in the Persian Gulf to build a Catholic church, the Sacred Heart Church, which will celebrate its 70th anniversary this year, since it was inaugurated with a Christmas Midnight Mass in 1939.

Relations between the Holy See and the Gulf kingdom saw significant progress in 2008. Not only did the Vatican receive the first ambassador from Bahrain, but King Hamad met Pope Benedict XVI as well. After the meeting on Jul 9 the sovereign issued an official communiqué inviting the Holy Father to visit the country.

When he heard that the Catholic community was going to get a new place of worship, Rev Hani Aziz of the National Evangelical Church said he hoped that the king could generously donate a plot of land to build a new Evangelical church as well. *ASIANEWS*

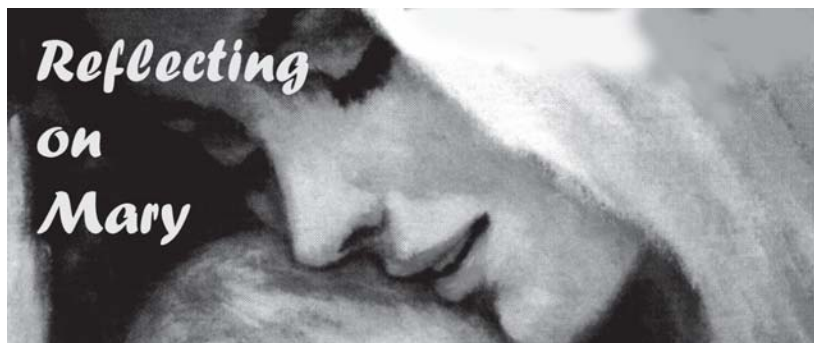


HONG KONG -Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun, 77, said he will retire as bishop of Hong Kong this April and focus on issues relating to the Catholic Church in China.

The cardinal said he would remain at the diocesan seminary to help nurture vocations and to focus on Chinese church issues.

He said he would continue to fulfil his duties as assigned by Pope Benedict XVI. The cardinal is a member of the Council of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, the special Vatican commission on China and the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments.

"China is a big country; the situation of the China church is complicated," he said, adding that he would continue to advise Pope Benedict on Chinese issues as long as he could. *CNS* □



Mary - A Help to Start Afresh

by Donald McDonald S.M.M.

A man told of his childhood at home with his brothers and sisters. They were not especially pious but they knew that when 'Mum is saying her prayers,' they played more quietly. She made no formal announcement, but when she had a moment to herself sat quietly in her chair with her open prayer book. If faith is caught rather than just taught, her family was particularly blessed.

As children we grow, and while all of us grow older not all of us grow up. We are expected to stand on our own feet making decisions, right or wrong, for ourselves and those involved with us. Parents and friends may care for us but they cannot take decisions for us.

This is also true of the life of faith. For those blessed with the insight of faith, there can be a shared outlook and approach to life in the world. But to make this mine, I first have to try to live it myself. I cannot really live on another's faith, even in someone who loves me dearly.

Others can help and encourage, but the response to God is something to which only I can give myself. This is best done from within the Christian community with people who share a like humanity as well as faith.

INDIVIDUAL PEOPLE

Pope John Paul II reflecting on the Jubilee Year 2000 which opened the Third Millennium, distinguished the individual from the anonymous group: "I often stopped to look at the long queues of pilgrims...In each of them I tried to imagine the story of a life, made up of joys, worries, sufferings: the story of someone whom Christ had met and who...was setting out on a journey of hope". (8)¹

Children, young people, "...with their irrepressible sense of celebration," families from all over the world, "come to draw fresh enthusiasm from the light that Christ sheds", (10) especially in a culture in danger of losing sight of the very meaning of marriage

and the family. Prisoners and entertainers were other categories Pope John Paul met, trying to see them as individuals.

These pilgrims representing the worldwide Church and people of goodwill, need help to walk a hard road. All of us are invited to accept the challenge of living in Christ in a world that crucified him, and does so again today in great numbers of his people.

THE FACE OF CHRIST

This help is found in our risen Lord Jesus and Our Lady. If we are to witness to God in Christ to others, and even to ourselves, "our witness would be hopelessly inadequate, if we ourselves had not first *contemplated his face*" (16). The Jubilee Year 2000 was an invitation, which many accepted, to do just that, through a response to Jesus in Gospel, sacrament and Christian living.

There is no magic wand which enables us to witness to Christ. We do not underestimate the problems we face, but through the insight of faith we know that, "we shall not be saved by a formula but by a Person, and the assurance which he gives us: I am with you!" (29) It is for us singly and together to make that conviction ours. Our risen Lord Jesus interprets life for us.

To contemplate the face of Christ, therefore, we are to be open to the presence and influence of God-holiness-through which we are given insight to truly see in faith the gift of God in Christ through the Spirit. We are to begin at the beginning with a growing

realization in wonder, of what it is to be baptized or christened. We come to know who we are in Christ: "...all pastoral initiatives must be in relation to holiness".(30)

WITH MARY

For us to contemplate Christ's face as a preparation for sharing the Gospel, "...calls for a Christian life distinguished above all in *the art of prayer...conversation with Christ which makes us his intimate friends*". (32) This should lead to an assimilation of prayer in relationship to the Trinity. To live within this pattern of holiness is, "...the summit and source of the Church's life, but also in personal experience, is the secret of a truly vital Christianity..." (32) To be increasingly centered there is not to fear the future, because we are then rooted in the source of life itself.

The Holy Father points out that to place pastoral planning under the heading of holiness as he has done, "...is a choice filled with consequences. It implies the conviction that, since Baptism is a true entrance into the holiness of God...it would be a contradiction to settle for a life of mediocrity". (31) To ask someone 'do you wish to be baptized?' is to say, 'do you wish to become holy?' "It means to set before them the radical nature of the Sermon on the Mount: "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48). (31)

Anyone familiar with the thought of St Louis Marie de Montfort hears unmistakable



The Baptism of Christ by John the Baptist.
Widener Collection, 1942, by Paris Bordone (Venetian 1500-1571)

echoes here of his teaching. He gave his life to preaching and living the primacy of baptism and its implications. Looking at the world which so often does not want God's will and actively opposes it, he saw that the type of people who could meet the challenge had to be created by the Holy Spirit. No pragmatic pastoral plan could ever change that situation.

In the person of Our Lady, indwelt

as she is by the creative Holy Spirit, Montfort saw someone who could help influence us to burn for God alone. In Our Lady's company, whom Montfort compares to Mount Tabor, the suggested place of the Transfiguration, those fortunate enough to be there "...will be transfigured as (Jesus) was..."²

Not even death will separate them. Life itself under her

influence will open to us the authentic Gospel at the deepest level, since "... (Mary) is the mountain on which Jesus Christ, who dwells there for ever, will teach them in his own words the meaning of the eight Beatitudes." This colossal claim Pope John Paul too finds true in his experience.

As the Jubilee Year 2000 was an occasion for the church to contemplate the face of Christ as she celebrated the anniversary of his birth, "at the same time, along with the memory of the birth of her Son, how could the memory of the Mother be missing?" (11) Mary was above all present 'in the great act of Entrustment,' with which the Holy Father entrusted to her maternal care the men and women of the new millennium.

While the markedly contemplative note throughout the Apostolic Letter reflects personal devotion, it is also objectively true of Mary. As prayer reminds us of "the primacy of Christ, and in union with him, the primacy of the interior life and holiness," (so when this is neglected) "... is it any wonder that pastoral plans come to nothing and leave us with a disheartening sense of frustration?" (38)

Given the familiar pattern human weakness which looks for something 'practical' to do with the expectation of immediate concrete results, we may bypass prayer and the need to approach a glimpse of the meaning of the Beatitudes. "... In the face of the many trials to which today's world subjects faith, (we) would be not only mediocre Christians but "Christians at risk". (34) We need to

rediscover an understanding of Church as 'mystery' and open ourselves to wonder. Time in Our Lady's company, who walked the way of faith as we do now, and who through God's providence was the way he chose to give us Christ, can only help.

Mary does this especially when before any pastoral plan we are "... to make the Church the home and school of communion... (which) indicates above all the heart's contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must always be able to see shining on the face of our brothers and sisters around us". (43) This is how the Gospel and the Church's living tradition has revealed her to us. She is one with us now in Christ, not as a lovely memory of yesterday, but, "... again as the radiant dawn and sure guide for our steps", who accompanies us (58) on our journey.

Like the mother who introduced these reflections, each in our own way, "together, we must all imitate the contemplation of Mary, who returned home to Nazareth from her pilgrimage to the Holy City of Jerusalem, treasuring in her heart the mystery of her Son". (59) □

Footnotes

1 John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (At the Start of the New Millennium), Rome, 6 11 January 2001. All quotations are from here unless otherwise stated. Numbers refer to paragraphs.

2 St. Louis Marie de Montfort, *Prayer for Missionaries* 25. The following quotation is from the same paragraph from the same paragraph. .

LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

I am sincerely grateful to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and Mary Help of Christians for all the favours received. *Mark W. Dodd, Pune*
My heartfelt gratitude to Our Lord and Mary Help of Christians for keeping my family, especially my children, Mira and Maya under your loving care. Do keep them always safe.

Mrs. P. Samagond, USA

I am grateful for the protection of Our Blessed Lady, Help of Christians while I was going to office on my Pulsar. I collided with a college student coming in the opposite direction but I was badly injured. After receiving some first aid at the company clinic I was taken to the nearby hospital for a major surgery after which I was advised rest for about 2 months. There were no major complications and for that I am most grateful to Our Lady's protection. *Wilfred Francis, Nagpur*
Thank you Mother for everything, please continue to help my husband to get a better job.

Sophie Vaz, Chennai

Just when I intended to cross the road a speeding car rushed by and collided with another speeding taxi from the opposite direction. Had I crossed the road or even attempted I would have been in the middle of an ugly accident. I am most grateful to Our Lady for protecting me and inspiring me to pause before crossing the road on that fatal day.

Maria Melina Fernandes, Toronto, Canada

Thank you dearest Mother Mary for helping my second son pass his SSC and HSC examinations and for all the blessings received through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys. *Mrs. H. Louis, Naigaum*
Mary was there when my daughter-in-law delivered a baby girl on December 12, 2008. It was a beautiful Christmas gift to our family. A fortnight later the baby had to be rushed to hospital with high fever. There were numerous tests conducted and they showed that the baby had a serious infection. When told that the baby had to further undergo tests two neighbours joined me in praying the Rosary and the 3 Hail Marys, invoking Our Blessed Mother to save the baby. Seeing the 18-day-old baby undergo such tests was quite a trauma. We had the baby baptized at the hospital. After further consultations it was decided that there was no further need of tests. We are ever grateful to Mary Help of Christians.

Lucas D'Souza, Pune

Thank you, dearest Mother, for blessing our family and for helping me get a good government job. Protect and guide us always.

Caroline Anthoniswamy

Thank you dear Mother Mary for helping me get better, grant us the grace of a peaceful death.

Mrs. Betty Fernandes, Mumbai

Thank you, dear Mary Help of Christians for all the graces granted to me and my family.

Vernon Pinto, Mumbai

Dear Mother Mary, thank you for helping my son get a job. I pray that he works well and I thank you for all the other blessings and graces you have showered on us.

B. D'Souza, 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.

Our sincere thanks to Our Blessed Mother, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio, through the faithful recitation of the three Hail Marys I have received so many graces. *Mrs. M. D'Rosario, Victoria*
I am grateful to Our Blessed Mother, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for granting me a promotion and a new section, through the faithful recitation of the three Hail Marys. *Rollin Fernandez, Trivandrum*

Thank you dearest Mother for the many favours and blessings on my family, for helping me acquire a new flat and for helping me sell my old one, for health and peace at home and for the success of my children in school. Do continue to bless us always. *Mrs. D. Rebello, Mumbai*
Thank you Mother Mary for helping my son find a good job through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys. *Monica D'Souza, Mumbai*

I am most grateful to Our Blessed Mother, through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys my wife had a successful operation and has recovered completely. *F. S. Noel, Trichy*

Our sincere thanks to Jesus and Mary Help of Christians for a decrease in blood pressure and the Lord heard my prayer.

Mrs. J. Cole, Tottenham, UK

Mary was There

I was at the Trident Oberoi, Mumbai on November 26th '08 when the terrorists struck. As I was walking towards the lift to go to my room on the 22nd floor at 9.45 pm I was in the midst of the terrorists who were shooting anyone in sight. I saw dead bodies lying in pools of blood on the ground floor. After all this, I still made it to my room on the 22nd floor and locked myself there for 40 odd hours and came out of the hotel unharmed. This was surely the powerful intercession of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and our Blessed Mother. The scapular which I wear, and the 3 Hail Marys which I recite daily before leaving for work helped me survive. Please continue to protect us all. *Ravi Kannan, Bangalore*

My sincere thanks to Our Lady and Don Bosco, through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys I have received so many favours including the success of my son in Std. X and XII examinations and helping him to regain his confidence. *Marita Gonsalves, Mumbai*

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

My sincere thanks to Our Lady, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio. My long awaited wish was granted. For seven years I prayed and God heard my prayer.

Surekha, Australia

I am most grateful to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco for helping me survive in turbulent and difficult times and also for providing for all my needs, financially and physically.

Mr. Mark W. Dodd, Pune

My grateful thanks to the Most Holy Trinity, Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for a safe delivery and the gift of a baby girl to my niece and for many other blessings.

Mrs. J.I. Fernandes, Mumbai

Thanks sincerely, dear Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for helping my daughter find a good job.

Mrs. Spinola Paul, Middlesex, UK

Thank you, Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for your help through the perpetual novena and the recitation of the 3 Hail Marys, Tristan now has all the necessary legal documents from the court.

D. Menezes, Malaysia

My sincere and humble thanks to Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco for curing my grandson from a very bad rash on his body.

Mrs. Hyacinth Smith, Trichy, TN

My belated but sincere thanks to Jesus, Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the safe delivery of my daughter-in-law and giving her a baby after four girls.

Sebastiana D'Silva, Goa

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

Mrs. Winifred D'Mello, USA

Thank you dear Jesus, Mother Mary and Don Bosco for helping me pass my MA part I examinations.

Merlyn D. Mumbai

Thank you dear Mother Mary and Don Bosco for all the blessings received through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys.

Bernie Pinho, Goa

We are grateful to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for granting my daughter special favours.

R. Pereira, Mumbai

My sincere thanks to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, his most blessed Mother Mary and St. John Bosco for saving me from disaster on March 6, I owe this favour to the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys and my devotion of the First Friday.

Dora Lobo

My heartfelt and grateful thanks to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for helping my daughter to obtain a good percentage in her SSC examinations and for helping my son to pass in his B.E. Examination. Please continue to shower on my children and me your blessings.

Mrs. L.M. Fernandes, Mumbai

THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



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

June & Mrs. Mary Tully, Trichy

Our sincere thanks to Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for a very special gift of a baby girl that my son and daughter-in-law received on 25th December, 2008.S.

S. D'Mello, Mumbai

I thank Our Lady, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the gift of a son to my daughter. I seek their blessings on my sweet little grandson Joshua and for all the graces and favours granted to me and my family.

Francisca Pacheco, Goa

My sincere and heartfelt thanks to Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for miraculously bringing my daughter back to us. Thank you for granting us so many other favours.

Angelica Ferns., Goa

My sincere thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for all the blessings received.

S. Rodrigues, Southampton, UK

Our sincere thanks to Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for helping my son pass his CET examinations with good marks and also for many other favours. Dear Mother do continue to protect us always.

Sashi Menon, Bangalore

Belated but sincere thanks to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for all the favours granted to us.

Keep us always under your protection.

Victor and Afra Fonseca, Mumbai

Thank you dear mother Mary Help of Christians and St. Dominic Savio for blessing us with a healthy baby boy and for all the favours received.

Pelacio D'Souza, Mumbai

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

MAY 2009

Holy Father's General Intention: *That the laity and the Christian communities may be responsible promoters of priestly and religious vocations.*

Missionary Intention: *That the recently founded Catholic Churches, grateful to the Lord for the gift of faith, may be ready to share in the universal mission of the Church, offering their availability to preach the Gospel throughout the world.*

Regd RNI no.9360/57;
Registered MH/MR/North East/089/2006-2008
License no. 146 to Post WPP
at Mumbai Patrika Channel Sorting Office,
Mumbai 400 001, on 1st & 2nd of every month:
Don Bosco's Madonna (Monthly)

Subs: (One copy Rs. 20/-); **Inland:** Rs. 200 p.a; **Airmail:** Rs.400 p.a

MARY WAS THERE

In May 2008, at the beginning of the monsoons it was raining incessantly and my two grandchildren (aged 6 & 3) were getting restless because they had to stay cooped up in the house. I made some paper boats and allowed them to play beside the little stream that flowed in front of our house. They were playing peacefully when suddenly there was a sudden crashing sound from the rear of the house. It came from the backyard. A huge tree that was very old was uprooted and broke over the verandah behind the house. If I had not taken the children to play at the little stream in front of the house they would have been playing on the back verandah where the tree had fallen. Our Blessed Mother Mary had guided our footsteps to safety before anything could happen. Every morning before beginning the day we recite the "Three Hail Marys" imploring Our Lady for her protection and she does keep her word, she does protect her children. *Lydia Palha, Goa*

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

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

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;

MO/PO/INTL MO/BPO/Bequests, Wills, Perpetual Burses, all favouring Don Bosco's Madonna or Bombay Salesian Society or Rev. Fr. Edwin D'Souza, (Trustee).

Please address everything to:

**Rev. Fr. Edwin D'Souza, sdb.,
SHRINE OF DON BOSCO'S MADONNA,
Matunga - MUMBAI - 400 019 - INDIA**

**Phone/Fax: 91-22- 2414 6320, email: dbmshrine@gmail.com
<http://www.donboscosmadonna.org/www.dbmshrine.org>**