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*To love
the Heart of Jesus
includes
loving Mary
because of the love
that made her give
birth to her
Son Jesus.*

**Cover: St. Anthony of Padua
in the Basilica of of St.
Anthony in Padua, Italy**



From The Editor's Desk

The Barometer of Family Intimacy

I think I would be right to presume, that in most homes here and perhaps even abroad, the dining table is the setting for some of the family's most intimate gatherings, not just at meals but at other times too. It is the place where family problems are discussed, programmes are charted out, family strategies are planned and possibly where even the departed are mourned and the wayward bemoaned. In a manner of speaking, it is the setting for many of the most intimate discussions that the family has had and will ever have. Even if we regret the fact that today many meals are taken at the other family shrine – the TV set, the dining table still remains the place where we are compelled to face one another squarely and *up close*; without any distraction. But for the food that we might partake of, the table is a place of intimacy, yet we all know how easily it can become a place of distance, hostility and even hatred. Precisely because the dining table bodes such intimacy, it just as easily becomes the place where we experience its absence. Amidst the clang of cutlery and the tinkle of crockery, a simple unguarded word or gesture might touch a raw nerve revealing some dormant tension and then there erupts an angry altercation coupled with bitter recriminations that positively destroy the decorum of this sacred setting. When, for instance, a husband and wife seem to go through a strain in their relationship they hardly communicate with one another; when a child or a teenager is berated for some truancy, he refuses to eat in order to express his hurt feelings, or when brothers and sisters bicker for some puerile reason, a tense silence might ensue and the table then becomes a hell in the home, a place where we least want to be. It becomes the most uncomfortable location in the house, an awkward family tribunal which we want to escape from, as quickly as possible.

The table is therefore the barometer of the level of intimacy that prevails in a home and this simple table becomes an altar at which we are all priests who reverently accept and embrace one another whatever our struggles or hurts, our complaints or disagreements because it is here that *bread is broken* and it is shared; it is here that the "*work of human hands*" is passed around and "*the sweat of every brow*" is appreciated and cherished. It becomes a place of hallowed intimacy. In the home (*after the family altar*) there is no place as hallowed as the dining table because it is graced by the presence of Him who reveals himself to the whole family – to those present and the absent ones too, to those who are happy and those who are not, to the hurting and the tired, the depressed and the drooping. It is here that we are all restored and revived because we can faintly hear Him say to all of us around the table: "**This is my body!**"

Fr. Ian Douulton sdb

6. ONE DAY AT A TIME

Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss

Which regular Church-goer hasn't heard the song 'One Day at a Time' and perhaps drawn inspiration from it some time or other in her/his life? Little would we realize though, that many of the songs that have been so inspirational to millions were actually born out of intense human pain and struggle! The author of "One Day at a Time", Marijohn Wilkin, went from one mountaintop of joy and success to another, but between those peaks were deep valleys filled with excruciating mental suffering.

Unusually Gifted

Marijohn's father, Ernest, used to play the violin and piano, and often led the singing at First Baptist Church of Sanger, Texas, and Marijohn quickly followed in her father's musical footsteps. By age five, she could play the piano by ear, and not long after could immediately repeat the songs she heard her father play. When Ernest was stricken with cancer Marijohn, then only fourteen, was thrust into the family business, *Melson's Veribest Bread*. Before his death three years later Ernest made Marijohn promise that she would go on to college to study music, and that she would take care of her mother. And she did both admirably. She excelled in college as a musician and a singer at the Hardin-Simmons University, where she was granted a full scholarship and was invited to join the University Cowboy Band as the only female member



ever. Here she was given numerous unusual opportunities to travel and perform with the Cowboy Band.

When her husband, Bedford Russell was killed during World War II in South Africa, where he was a pilot, she found strength to rise above the sorrow and continued as a schoolteacher. She sang as an alto soloist in her Church choir and also tried her hand at writing songs yet thought so little of her efforts that she didn't keep the manuscripts. But, by age thirty-seven, she had moved to Nashville, Tennessee, where she became one of the leading songwriters in the country music industry and founded 'Buckhorn Music Publishers'. She re-married and had a young son named John Buck. She wrote more than four hundred country songs, and many of them rose to the top of the charts.

Amid the acclaim, money, and success she enjoyed as a country music songwriter, Marijohn unfortunately stopped attending Church and eventually became a victim of alcohol abuse. On more than one occasion during this period, she attempted suicide. But God had other plans for her!

The Supreme Effort

At about age fifty-three, Marijohn recalls: "one day I stopped by a small church and asked a young minister if I could talk with him. As the conversation progressed, the minister asked what at that time, seemed a funny question - but it worked. He asked, 'Did you ever think about thanking God for your problems?' (Eph 5:20). I left his office and drove back home.

"When I reached the house, I found it was empty, and I somehow felt inspired. I sat down at the piano and began to play and sing - out loud - the entire chorus to 'One Day at a Time.' *'That's all I'm asking from You. Just give me the strength to do every day, what I have to do.'* It just dropped into my heart... and I realized that the song was actually a prayer - and I got some relief.

"I wrote the chorus on the back of an envelope as fast as I could write. I then continued to sing, *'Do You remember when You walked among men? Well, Jesus, You know, if You're looking below, it's worse now than then.'* I wasn't quite sure the Lord knew where I was. I'd never quit believing in Him...

"The following morning, my mind went back to the song. I had the second verse and the chorus, but somehow wasn't satisfied with the beginning. Kris Kristofferson and

Rita Coolidge, who were married at the time, were in town. They had just had a huge hit, 'Why Me, Lord?' written by Kris. Their recording had won a Dove Award for them. I called Kris and asked him to help me with the first verse. He had written songs for my company, Buckhorn Music, and we'd had some pretty big hits as a publisher.

"When I showed him how I started the song, *'I'm just a mortal...'* he looked at me and said, 'Why don't you say, *"I'm only human, I'm just a man . . ."*' I said, 'That's good! That's what I need.' We finished the first verse in about twenty minutes. The lines just flew out from each of us."

A Great Hit: Reflections

The song, first recorded by Marilyn Sellers, rose to become the number one song in several categories. In this country, it was first a hit on the country charts and then it crossed over to the pop charts. It was the number one pop song in England, the number one country song in Ireland, and among the top ten in two other countries. Each recording has been by a different artist in that particular country. It has long since passed the six hundred mark in artist recordings and has crossed over into the Southern Gospel Music genre.

Though each day of our lives can bring seemingly insurmountable challenges, we can never afford to forget that God has a definite plan for good for each one of us. Besides, he has categorically affirmed that he will never forsake us especially when we reach the end of our tether, as it were. This truth is brought home to us in so many different ways, yet at the

most crucial moment, we tend to forget. Most of us have undoubtedly heard the story of "Footprints in the Sand" with its punch line: 'When you were in trouble there appears only one set of footprints because it is at that time that I carry you in My arms, My child! And those footprints are Mine, not yours!'

In fact, we could almost say that God often sends us adversity to keep us reminded of his closeness because somehow we have strayed from his loving embrace or taken his love for granted. Doesn't prosperity and success have the uncanny power of luring us into believing that we can manage our lives by ourselves? How often at such times have we not behaved as if we were a 'god' unto ourselves, only to come crashing down at the first obstacle we encountered, realizing that we too have feet of clay - and then back again to the more familiar groping for God's reliable help!

A quick glance over your life would reveal the biggest obstacle you currently face! Hidden within this problem is the greatest

opportunity of your life! "Do not be afraid - I hold you in the palm of my hands... I will never forget you!" whispers the Lord of life, reassuringly! Realizing his closeness and positive desire that we grow, could we respond with a heartfelt 'Thank-you' to him who never fails us, no matter what?!? Make the best of each opportunity while it lasts and for all you know something great may be in the making!

Like Marijohn, you might just be able to bequeath to future generations a real masterpiece of inspiration. How much do you not lose by merely succumbing to the temptation to take the easy way out - to let yourself sink down under and drown in your own negativity! Jesus assures all of us: "I have come that you may have life in all its fullness!" (Jn. 10:10). And that promise remains true even today. Jesus abides in the Sacrament of love, the Eucharist, not just to receive our praise and thanks, but precisely to raise us up from destructive moments and send us out as ambassadors of life and love. When last did you spend a

few pregnant moments of silence in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament? Why not decide to make some time for this today and maybe every day of your life? Visit your parish Church and the Blessed Sacrament Chapel and just remain there in deep silence. You can be sure you will return a changed person! Listen deeply, and you just might find yourself called to turn over a new leaf! □



Marijohn with Kris Kristofferson

**"ALL THINGS TURN OUT WELL
FOR THOSE WHO LOVE GOD" (Romans 8:28)**

Fr. Richard D'Souza, sdb

Confessor at the shrine, Chaplain to the FMA convent

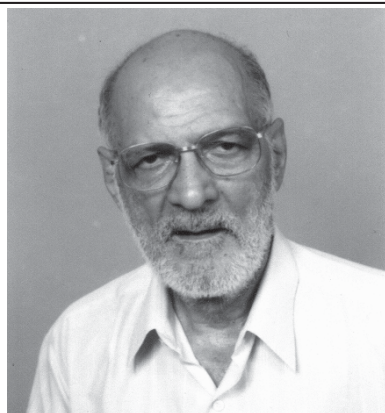


I am the third in the family of ten, seven boys and three girls. Three of whom are privileged to serve God in his service: two priests and one nun. It is all due to the lively faith and great sacrifices of our parents, of happy memory, that God chose us.

My parish at Urwa in Mangalore is a centre of devotion to our Lady of Pompei, and attracts numerous devotees. From a tender age I prayed for the grace to become a Priest, because of the lives of our Parish Priests and their zeal for souls.

After SSLC in 1946, when I expressed desire to join the Mangalore Seminary at Jeppu, my mother took me to meet Rev. Victor Fernandes, Bishop of Mangalore - my uncle. In 2 years that I spent in the Seminary, I came to know of Don Bosco, by reading some issues of Don Bosco Madonna, published from Matunga, Bombay. I also read the life of Don Bosco. When I expressed the desire to join any Religious Order, the Jesuit Spiritual Director, suggested that I join the Salesian Congregation which looked after poor boys. He asked me to write to Fr. Joseph Carreno, the Salesian Provincial at Madras. Fr. Carreno asked me to get a discharge from my Bishop. But it was a year before he gave it to me.

Fr. Carreno then asked me to come to Tiripattur and a year later I went to Kotagiri for my Novitiate in 1949-'50. Among my companions is Fr. Mathew Thalanany, who works at St. Dominic Savio's Church, Antop Hill, Mumbai. I have worked



in Tamilnad, Goa and Maharashtra. I had my share of troubles and trials. It was my tender devotion and strong faith in our Blessed Mother that I have been able to persevere. This year 2010, I celebrate the Golden Jubilee of my Priesthood and Diamond Jubilee of my Religious Profession, I was ordained on 1 July 1960 at Yercaud (Tamilnad) where Fr. Casarotti was the rector. It is all through God's bounty and our Lady's powerful intercession I am what I am today, unworthy though I am of such graces and blessings. My sister Gilda, A.C., celebrates the Golden Jubilee of her Religious Profession this year at St. Agnes, Convent, Bendore, Mangalore. My younger brother Fr. Fredrick, is a Diocesan Priest in the Archdiocese of Kolkata. He has been a priest for 40 years. At the moment he is unwell. Dear readers, please remember him in your prayers. It is my earnest prayer that many more youngsters from our Christian families be called to serve God as priests, in this year of Priests. □

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THE MEANING OF LIFE

by Giovanna Colonna

I had become an aunt when my nephew was born. He is cousin to my children and he was beautiful, so healthy. My friend had a niece who was born, a cousin to her children, beautiful, severely handicapped and unique.

We are always thrilled at a birth. It is an act of God that is always mysterious and fascinating; we can only imagine so many things about a child before it is born but the emotion of holding this little bundle of life in one's arms is more than we can bear - it is surely an event that takes one's breath away.

My son reflects on his good fortune; he is healthy, he's a student, an avid sportsman and he asks me about my friend's little niece. What will become of her since she doesn't enjoy the same good fortune? Moreover, the child gurgles with laughter as we stand around its crib and we dream about this little child's future. We make ridiculous wisecracks about its talents, preferences and tastes. My nephew is getting ahead

confidently, preparing to face all the challenges and opportunities ahead of him.

What will become of my friend's niece? She will have the same challenges, choices and the same opportunities. Her health will be her parents' concern; they will be proud of her achievements and thrilled with her results. My nephew will go to school, play games, go to Catechism class. He will even become an athlete and of course he will encounter Jesus Christ.

What is it that distinguishes these two lives?

Nothing! And yet everyone thinks these two lives are so different, one is lucky the other is not; one is fortunate, the other is not; one is full of achievements, the other is not. All parents yearn for a child, preferably a healthy one and only subsequently do they think the child should be good, generous, honest and honourable.

I try to explain to my nephew that life is important in itself because it is life, because it is unique, now or never, it is unrepeatable, with its own rules, its independent priorities that sometimes upset the order we try to impose on our daily lives, the order that we have grown accustomed to and which guides and governs what we call "our lives."

But life is not ours,





we are only simple beneficiaries, we are tenants not owners, players who have some rules to play by: our astuteness, our courage, our commitment will help us to play a wonderful game. Abiding by these rules we may even put up a good score. Through these rules we will be introduced to Him who creates all life and places us in game, suggesting moves that are original and which will help us achieve success and victory. The secret of life is to play intensely and enthusiastically. What mark will my nephew leave on history? What mark will my friend's niece leave on history? But, above all, what mark will they leave on all our lives? How will *we* play our part in the game of their lives?

Our life is not exclusively ours; we influence our parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, friends, colleagues; in fact, everyone we encounter. They will all be touched by my life and personality and after meeting me they will not be the same because of the love and affection or the anger and discontent will make them act by one set of rules rather than another.

The game will be intense, rules will change and so we should be ready for the possibility of a new game with someone else. It will be an opportunity to be different from who we have been. We will be someone else, employed at another location and not where we are.

To refuse to change means to

turn down a series of possibilities or encounters, discoveries, victories or defeats together with the opportunity to begin again. Refuse to live or to kill life means to deny a new person a role in this world; an opportunity to participate in history; to encounter us, to yearn for a future, to seek out the best...to find God.

Gifts are never turned down, they are utilised, at times they are given to others; life is given to us as a gift, let us use it to the best of our ability to bring flavour to life. That is how we become the "salt of the earth"; that is how we will give life. We have been given light - let us brighten the lives of others.



In flavouring others we flavour ourselves, in illuminating others we brighten our own lives. We should learn to live with others, for others and in others because we have been called from all eternity to live a unique life, a life without end, a life with God, for God and in God.

My dear son, the significance of your life is no different from that of others. Always be yourself, be a credible witness of the unique bond that makes you great and gives glory to God your Father and makes people exclaim: "This is truly a child of God!" □

walking with the Church



Holidays & Mass, Scruples, God, Our Lady & the Saints, the Paschal Mystery, Despair

From: St. Martin's Messenger, Ireland

One of the readers, writing about the wording of a reply regarding the obligation to go to Mass when on holidays, feels that the answer we gave could lead to some misunderstanding and needed clarification. (Editor)

My apologies for the wording and any misunderstanding caused. On the question of Sunday Mass the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) states: 'On Sundays and holidays of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass.' (CCC 2180). Should we go to Mass when on holidays? The answer is 'yes'. If it is not too difficult to attend Mass during our holidays then we should go.

Q. *When praying I tend to lose concentration and I have got into the habit of repeating the prayers over and over. My wife is very worried about this. What advice would you give me?*

A. It seems clear to me that you are scrupulous. The immediate advice I would give you now is not to repeat your prayers. God loves you and is listening to you and knows you are sincere in your prayers, despite the fact that, like most

people, you get distracted. Trust Him and seek the help of a kind and patient priest who will advise you on how to overcome these scruples.

Q. *A friend of mine, non Catholic (a good person) said to me recently that praying to Our Lady and to Saints may turn us away from God and from Christ our one and only Saviour. I wasn't able to answer him. Can you help?*

A. There are people, like your friend, who think like that and who, like your friend, are good and sincere people. But let us examine what they say. Take Lourdes for example or any other Marian Shrine. If we think about it we will see that the devotions practiced in these shrines all lead us to Jesus Christ. We are guided to prayer and repentance for our sins. In these Marian shrines the highlight of each day is the celebration of the Eucharist. We are also called to unselfishness, to a giving of self, to forget self and to consider the poor, the sick and to listen with a deeper awareness to Christ's words, 'Every time you

did it for them, you also did it for me.' Need we say more? As for the Saints; Sincere devotion to any of the Saints, like St. Anthony of Padua, or St. Francis of Assisi or Don Bosco will ask of us that we sincerely imitate their faith, generosity and love.

Q. I was asked to be a minister of the Eucharist but I refused because I felt I was unworthy. I am worried about saying no. Did I do wrong?

A. Most people feel unworthy but still go ahead and accept being ministers of the Eucharist for some few years. No one of us is worthy. The Priest is not worthy to celebrate the Eucharist. But once we are properly called we take comfort in the truth that to those who do what they can, God will never deny His Grace. But if you know that you would not be comfortable or that you would find it stressful in any way there is no obligation to become a minister. You can help the church - the people of God - in many other ways as the Spirit leads you.

Q. I heard a priest in a sermon recently mention the term 'paschal mystery.' I had heard it mentioned on other occasions but this time it hit me that I really did not understand what it means. I am fairly sure that there are many like me. Would you be kind enough to answer this question?

A. Thank you for your question. Like you, I think there are many who may not fully understand its meaning. Briefly - The Paschal Mystery is the greatest event of the Christian Faith - it is the passion, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Feast of Pentecost. It reflects the Jewish Passover

which is God's act of delivering the Jewish People from Egypt. In the 'Paschal Mystery' Christ 'passed over' to the Father in his passion, death, resurrection and ascension drawing all humankind with him. We celebrate the Paschal Mystery during Holy Week and the Easter Season and indeed every time we offer Mass which makes present again the one eternal sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Q. I would like to be a good Christian, but sometimes I almost despair. Time and again when I think my life is going well and I am keeping free from sin, I fall with an ease which depresses me.

A. As you can see I have reduced your letter to just the above three lines. I can understand your disappointment in yourself. You are not alone in feeling like this. All those who are sincerely trying to be better Christians feel remorse when they sin. And we all sin at one time or another. We are a mixture of good and bad. In this world we will never be perfectly good. So what should we do?

We must acknowledge the dark side of ourselves without conceding victory to it. We can try with God's help to weed out the bad. It will be painful. But even if we fail in our efforts we must not despair or give up but continue to struggle. It is through struggle that we grow, provided that we do not throw in the towel and say we can't ever change. Not only is the Lord merciful and forgiving but with His help we will slowly and gradually improve. Don't lose heart. The Lord is with you all the way. □

Witnesses in & for Our Times



BL. RAMON LLULL (JUNE 30) 1233 - 1315 ONLY WITH LOVE AND GOOD SENSE

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

He was not a very well known person nor is he much quoted in ecclesial circles and yet through his life and his works he succeeded in carving out for himself a place in the history of philosophy (and theology). He even earned a place in the school of mysticism. That was Ramon Llull who was born at Palma di Majorca in 1233 and died on the same island in 1315.

In some way, I would consider him a modern saint, relevant, direct and worthy of consideration when approaching certain problems that we seem to face today and have not yet resolved. He understood them, studied them and suffered for them already then. Truthfully, history doesn't reveal anything that isn't sensational. But Ramon is worthy of mention because he, at least tried, with much dedication, much intelligence and love.

Ramon Llull was the only child of a wealthy French-descended merchant from Barcelona who settled on Majorca with James I of Aragon after the king conquered the island from the Moors in 1229.

Llull was raised and educated at the court but there is little known about his early years. He was eventually appointed advisor to the young James II of Majorca, who received the island from his father in 1253. He was given to a life of revelry and debauchery at the court but sometime in 1263 or 1264, Llull underwent a profound religious conversion, induced by repeated visions of Christ crucified. At this time he is said to have conceived the three great goals of his life's work as a missionary. These goals form the indispensable context for any understanding of his doctrines and activities. They were: (1) the founding of schools to teach missionaries the oriental languages, (2) the writing of a book to prove Christian doctrine, and (3) the propagation of the Faith among the infidels (Moslems). Inspired by a Franciscan sermon, Llull renounced his life at court, sold all his goods, and went on pilgrimages to Rocamadour, Compostela, and other shrines.

Returning to Barcelona in 1265, he met Raymond de Penyafort, the

redoubtable former Dominican Master-General, who approved Llull's goals, but urged that he prepare himself adequately in advance. Consequently Llull returned to Majorca for nine years of study, which included learning Arabic from a Muslim slave. He seems to have acquired the rudiments of a traditional medieval arts curriculum education, and acquainted himself with the literature of St. Augustine, St. Anselm and Franciscans, perhaps by reading materials available at the Dominican and Franciscan churches then existent in Palma de Majorca. Similarly he acquired some knowledge of traditional Islamic theology and philosophy, apparently from their more popular manifestations among the various schools or sects of Majorcan Islam, and from versions (perhaps excerpted) of the works of great Arab authorities such as Algazel.

In 1274, Llull received an intellectual 'revelation' on Mount Randa near Palma, which effected the transformation of his nascent doctrine of Divine Dignities or attributes of the Godhead into a global meta-physical system. The first *Ars magna*, or *Ars compediota inveniendi veritatem*, completed shortly afterwards, was the first redaction of this system, the famed Lullian Art. In 1275 Llull left Majorca to seek the patronage of his former associate James II, now ruler of Majorca, Roussillon, Cerdanya, and Montpellier. He thus began a life of nearly constant pilgrimage. Llull's works were approved by a friar minor appointed to inspect them by James II. Llull then received approval for establishing a monastery at Miramar on Majorca; this was

founded in 1276 with thirteen Franciscans who were to study the Liberal Arts, Theology, oriental languages, Islamic doctrines and Llull's own Art.

The death of Pope Honorius IV (3 April 1287) and Llull's lack of academic credentials frustrated his attempt to obtain a papal hearing at Rome that year for his proposals. He went then to Paris,



Ramon is seen here preparing for his mission by taking lessons in Arabic from a Saracen slave.

where he was licensed by one of the Chancellors, Bertaud de Saint-Denis, and authorized to teach his *Art*. This license indicates that Llull must have possessed some academic qualifications, but their source or nature is uncertain, and licensing requirements were still flexible at this time.

About 1290 Llull began an association with the Spiritual Franciscans, whose unorthodox millenarian doctrines were commonly associated with him even during his own lifetime, although he rejected their views and wrote several anti-Spiritual works. In Genoa, in 1290, Llull suffered some kind of spiritual crisis: he vacillated with anguish between joining the Dominican or Franciscan orders; the former had already rejected his *Art*, but a revelation indicated that it was his only path of personal salvation; he eventually joined the Franciscans, whose vows he took at the rank of tertiary. Deciding ultimately on an overseas mission, Llull enlisted the support of James II of Aragon, who recommended him to King Abu Hafs Omar I of Tunis, where Llull arrived in mid-1293. Adopting a common Dominican tactic, Llull challenged local Islamic scholars to a debate on the relative truth of their faiths, which led to his speedy banishment from Tunis and return to Naples. He visited Majorca briefly again in 1294.

At Rome once more in 1299, his views were heard with little enthusiasm, and he went from there to Barcelona. At the court of James II of Aragon, Llull received permission to evangelize the Moors within James's realm, and dedicated more works to him and

his wife, Blanche of Anjou, before returning to Majorca.

Later he went to Genoa where he succumbed to a serious psychological crisis that almost drove him insane. Completely exhausted he finally departed for Tunisia. But he was expelled the moment he arrived. Later in 1307 he went to Algeria (to Bughia). He had hoped his theories would receive a favourable hearing there. His intentions were excellent and his the preparations too, but, the Moslems arrested him, beat him, imprisoned him and condemned him to death. He was finally expelled for attempting to preach the Gospel.

Raymond did not give up. He once more attempted to go to Tunisia when he was 80 years old, in 1314. There he devoted himself to working for the Moslem sovereign and he tried to discuss the Koran with the Moslem scholars but things did not go well. He ended up being stoned. He was picked up by some Genoese merchants and brought home where he died in 1315 shortly after.

Was he a martyr for the faith? Perhaps, at least some say 'yes'. Some doubt it. He certainly suffered a lot for his beliefs and for his own convictions. There was another view that Llull died early in 1315 upon returning to his native Majorca, where he was buried in the convent of Saint Francis. However there is much devotion to him especially in his own country. Already in the XVI cent. he was revered as Blessed. Until 1850 the Pope of Rome, Pius IX confirmed the authenticity of his holiness and confirmed it with the title of Blessed. ▣

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Babysitting

With some misgivings, we left a young babysitter in charge of our three energetic youngsters.

When we returned a few hours later, she was sitting alone watching TV. I went to check on the children and found them in our narrow hallway. By bracing their arms and legs against the walls, two of them had climbed up to the ceiling.

"The babysitter taught us how," they said gleefully.

The sitter joined me, her face a deep red. "Since they had me climbing the walls, I figured they might as well be too," she stammered.

We kept the same girl for the next two years.

What's for Dinner?

The young couple invited their elderly pastor for Sunday dinner. While they were in the kitchen preparing the meal, the minister asked their son what they were having.

"Goat," the little boy replied.

"Goat?" replied the startled man of the cloth, "Are you sure about that?"

"Yep," said the youngster. "I heard Dad say to Mom, 'Today is just as good as any to have the old goat for dinner.'"

Prescription Labels

A pharmacy major was taking a course in Dispensing. One day they were discussing the various labels affixed to prescription containers, such as, "Take with food," and "Take with water."

At the end of class, the professor passed out a few sample labels.

Days later he noticed that one member of the class had stuck one

of them onto his chemistry textbook. It read:

"Caution: May cause extreme drowsiness."

Nice Boyfriend

One night a teenage girl brought her new boyfriend home to meet her parents, and they were appalled by his appearance: leather jacket, motorcycle boots, tattoos and pierced nose.

Later, the parents pulled their daughter aside and confessed their concern. "Dear," said the mother diplomatically, "he doesn't seem very nice."

"Oh please, Mom," replied the daughter, "if he wasn't nice, why would he be doing 500 hours of community service?"

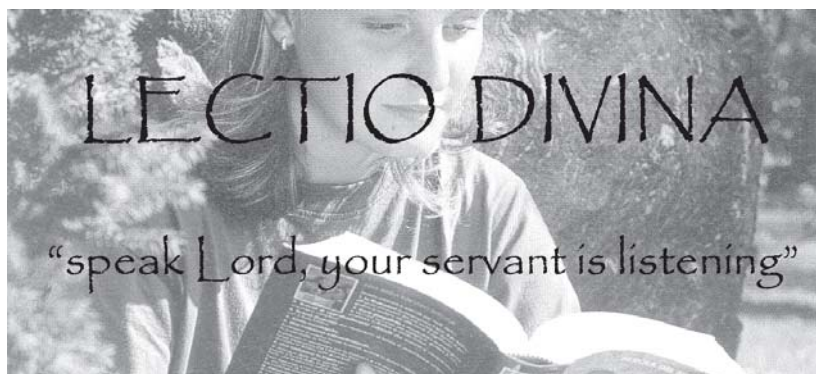
Sick Call

Mr. Frobisher constantly called Dr. Wilson at all hours of the day and night and would then keep him on the phone with a litany of imagined ailments.

Finally the doctor could take it no longer. "Listen, Mr. Frobisher, if you wake me up again in the middle of the night with another one of your tales about some made-up ailment, I am going to insist you see another physician. Have I made myself clear?"

A week later, Mr. Frobisher slipped and fell down a flight of stairs, breaking his hip, two ribs, an elbow, and suffering a concussion. He was rushed to the hospital and put in intensive care.

An hour later, Dr. Wilson walked in, saw his condition, and exclaimed "I think you're finally getting the hang of it!" □



CALLED TO TRAINING

by Dermot Connolly

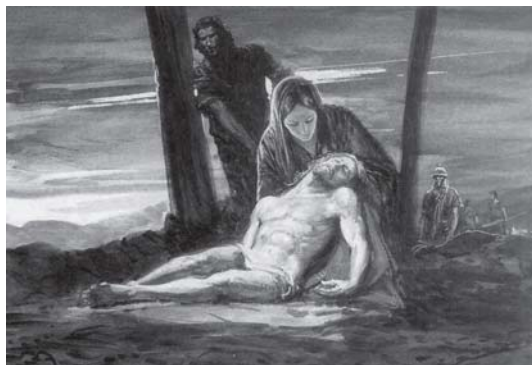
Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them... And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour. (Luke 2:51-52)

When I was a lad, the top scorers in the nation-wide Leaving Certificate Examination at the end of secondary school were invited to become school teachers. Such was the high regard in which teachers were held -they were the pick of the bunch. It was proudly referred to as being "Called to

Training", without any need to explain what the training might be for. Could you say that Jesus was called to training? The gospels contain many occasions when, even as an adult, he was taught, influenced, chastened or changed by people that he met.

At a wedding in Cana, when the wine at the meal ran out, his mother urged him to do something: he livened up the party by changing water into wine - and his own life changed with it (John 2: 1-11). One of my own first teachers in the Scriptures wrote of it that Mary was "the eternal woman provoking man (in this case the God-man) to excellence". That excellence would be achieved at the hour of his passion.

Jesus was impressed by an officer in the Roman army of



occupation who taught him a lesson in the use of authority: "For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go', and he goes, and to another, 'Come', and he comes..." (Matthew 8:5-13). Another foreigner, a Canaanite woman, rebutted his rudeness to her, and won him over by her wit and her faith. She also challenged the narrowness of his vision: it is not only the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" who may eat at the Lord's table (Matthew 15:21-28). He should widen his horizons!

He learned those lessons well: after his resurrection he told his apostles, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 28: 18-20). Perhaps, like many men, Jesus had to learn his own emotions. Arriving too late for the burial of Lazarus, he was lofty with Martha, seeming to offer her only the cold comfort of her brother's resurrection on the last day. But



The Samaritan Woman at the well

her sister Mary's desolation broke through his reserve and brought him to tears: "When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved... Jesus began to weep" (John 11: 17 -35). He was the better man for it.

The Word made flesh was truly human, and it seems, like any of us, he had to learn what we call the wisdom we buy through the lessons of life. Being "called to training" belongs to the mystery of the Incarnation; it is even part of the scandal of the cross. For there were other lessons he had to learn, as the Letter to the Hebrews reminds us: "Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered" (Hebrews 5:7-10). Or as St. Paul put it, Christ Jesus "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave... and became obedient to the point of death -even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him" (Philippians 2:6-11). And so he excelled. ▣

*Mary was
the eternal woman
provoking man
to excellence.
That excellence
would be achieved
at the hour
of his passion.*

THE CONSECRATED

by George Davis and

At life's early start, and, its every twist and turn,
In life's joys and woes, and, when the race is run,
Unstintingly supporting, unconditionally giving,
Constantly uplifting and in God's name blessing,
Are the *consecrated* hands of a Priest.

Be we rich or poor, famous or unsung,
Enter we all this wondrous world as sinners,
But are made children of God – pure as angels,
Through the cleansing waters of **Baptism**,
By the *beautiful* hands of a Priest.

When we are tempted and wander away,
Down pathways of sin and shame,
At the **Confessional** – in God's name,
It's *only* the hand of a Priest that absolves us,
Not once, but again and again.

By the laying of hands the Spirit in us indwells,
With His Gifts and Fruits descends,
In **Confirmation** our faith to strengthen;
And the channel that brings the Paraclete upon us,
Are the *hallowed* hands of a Priest.

In the stillness of the early morning,
'Ere the sun emerges from the East,

HANDS OF A PRIEST

Fleur Fernandes, Pune

At the altar each day, in Holy **Eucharist**,
God rests between the pure fingers,
Of the *sanctified* hands of a Priest.

The hands of a king holding his scepter,
Are not equal to them in splendor,
For behold their dignity is unique,
With Divine Power vested in *consecrated* hands,
Ordained to minister to the royal **Priesthood**.

When with the golden band, life's partner we bond
Deft hands may prepare us a fitting feast,
But the hand that blesses and unites us in harmony,
In the Sacrament of holy **Matrimony**,
Are the *empowered* hands of a Priest.
When death's dew on our eyelids is falling,
May our courage and strength be increased,
By the **Anointing** of our frail bodies,
Raised over in benediction at our parting,
By the *beautiful* hands of a Priest.

God protect our priests and keep them holy,
For, what can we, poor sinners, do better
Than **THANK** them for their selfless service,
And ask Him, Who chose them, to **BLESS**,
The "Other Christs" with the consecrated hands. □

SUNDAY WALK

by Gary Thomson

A boy wandered along a graveled riverside pathway; several paces in front of his watchful parents. The afternoon sun drew the smell of fermenting new mown grass along the tended knolls. The father threw several skipping stones over the water, and these the lad watched with growing delight.

Nothing else moved along the still water except a flotilla of ducklings, five speckled bobbing corks led by an adult whose head turned in restless sweeping arcs. The child turned his attention to them. He toddled near the water and plunked himself onto the grass.

The boy's parents ambled towards a nearby bench. The mother ran a hard look over the white splotches on the seat.

"I didn't come out here to sit in a pigeon's mess," she said. "I prefer to stand." Her voice was dry and tart.

She drew her arms tighter about her thin bosom, as she studied the path in front of her. A passing couple nodded a greeting, but she did not respond.

Her dark angry eyes and stiff chin gave her a threatening intensity.

"Suit yourself, my dear." Her husband had seated himself at the end of the bench. He curled his left arm over the back slats. He was tall and angular with youthful good looks. His fine sandy hair clung damply to his forehead. "Would you prefer to sit on the grass, next to Michael?"

"The clippings would make a mess of my skirt," she said.

"You can use my nylon pullover."

"No, thank you."

"You should try to relax a bit. We're not on a marathon, are we?" His voice had a mechanical lightness, as if her irritability had long ago become a distant concern for him.

Still she responded as if he had stung her. A flush rose along her cheeks; and her eyes filled with disdain. "You said we were coming for a walk; I wanted to come for a walk. Now let's carry on with the walk." She shifted her feet and seemed to dig them into the gravel path.

The young man puckered his gentle mouth; he exhaled slowly. He kept his attention straight ahead, on the ducklings who in their freedom were gabbling like excited washerwomen. One little trailer dunked his grey tufted head, turned bottoms up and attempted foraging beneath the water's surface. The others waited, sneezing and gossiping. The young man smiled.

"We used to enjoy walking a lot, before we were married," he said. "Remember, we'd go by old Luigi's, he'd be watching, ask us to stop for a taste of his home-made wine."

Some of the hardness went out of her eyes. She moved her left foot to smooth a fold of gravel. "You always preferred that, sitting in the sun talking, rather than getting on. You didn't care to look around the next corner."

He sensed the easing of bitterness in her voice, and was caught in rising enthusiasm.

"Not always. Sometimes it seemed like we could walk forever, never getting tired of it or each other." His glance went to the child; he was picking among the stones at the water's edge.

"Not even that border collie on Rosedale, remember, tore the gash out of my pants, he couldn't hold us back. Nothing stopped us in those days."

The young woman kept her mouth in a thin angry line. A shadow of fury seemed to dart across her eyes. "You remember well, don't you? What you want to remember." She looked straight into his face, and the strength of her controlled rage made him uneasy; "Well, I remember too. Last time you went walking -right into another losing proposition. A turkey farm, of all crazy things. And our money went flying away with those awful birds."

"Marty had all the facts and figures. Everything was there. It looked good on paper."

"When will you see him in clear light? Marty doesn't lose his own money; only other peoples'. He's a crook, a smooth operator. Your friend." She spat the last words with abrupt savagery.

Her taunting raised a deep colour in the young man's face. A hurt look came into his eyes. He drew his shirt collar wider, and with the back of his hand made a pretence of drawing sweat from his forehead.

"It seemed a good idea at the time," he said.

"All your grand schemes seemed a good idea. The sporting goods store, the outdoor pub, the turkey farm. Marty won't tell you, but I will. You need more than good intentions to make it go. You

have to work at it. Hard, dirt-under-your-nails work." Her shoulders stooped as she gathered the remembrance of failed dreams about her; and resentment pinched her narrow face.

The young man turned his gaze back to the child. He watched as squat pudgy fingers picked around the contours of several loose stones. In his determination the boy's two top teeth bit into his lower lip. At last the tiny hand secured a likely stone in a nut brown grip.

"I'll have a lucky day soon," the young man said. "I can feel it. It's a matter of hitting into a winner. You'll see. You'll feel better about us."

The sweetness of the mown grass washed against the woman's face. "Can't you see? There is no soon - only now. Michael needs clothes and I need things for the house. And some peace of mind. Now we are strangling in debt, and I don't know if tomorrow we might be sleeping on the street." The hardness eased out of her voice; sadness softened the tight line of her mouth.

For a time the young man kept silent. His thoughts seemed remote and unconcerned. Then he let sound a low whistle. "Look, dear. This stone he'll be able to skip for sure." He leaned forward on the bench as his son came running towards him, the outthrust hand and the tiny pumping legs; and a tightness came into his throat.

The child reached him panting, his fat cheeks red with excitement. His ruffled white hair glowed like a fox cub's mane.

The father reached the child to

him. With his thumb he straightened the elastic ruffles of the training pants which encircled chubby tanned legs.

Then he ran his finger over the boy's rounded stomach, along the miniature steam engines and red cabooses which decorated his grass stained jersey;

"Some day we'll take a long ride on a choo-choo like this, and go far-r away." He jiggled the child's stomach; the youngster squealed with delight. He held the stone in his hand towards his father.

"Why don't you go?" The woman's throat worked slowly around the words, and her jaw tightened.

"Why don't you do it? Go. For once see something through to the end." Her breath caught in a tight sob. "I still have some pride; don't be throwing that around like straw money."

The young man went suddenly rigid. He did not look at his wife, but kept his gaze on his son's stone, raising it against the horizon. "Ah, Michael, good choice. This one is a certified beauty;" It was slate grey and water-worn nearly flat. Thin ivory veins ran along the leading edge.

"Come, mother, and take a look at this one. It'll walk the water like a ballet dancer."

The child's blue eyes danced with wonder and gladness.

But the woman seemed locked in contemplation. Her fingers gripped her sweater around the elbows; and thin shoulders hunched forward in quiet defiance.

"Listen to me, both of you. I said we were going for a walk. We're missing the best part of the day with this foolishness." Her voice

was dry and trembling. "Gathering stones... Are you coming now?"

The father cradled the pebble in his open hand to test for weight, then crooned his approval. He stood up from the bench and took the child's hand in his own. "Later, mom. The walk can wait. We have important matters to begin." The warmth in the curled fingers and the softness along the knuckles gave him great pleasure. He thought of his kid gloves that he used for autumn driving.

They walked to the water's edge. There the father knelt with one knee in the grass. The child reached a hand up to him and took the stone from his father. The child's eager question hung in the warm air. "'T'row now?"

"Hold a sec, so we're sure how to do it." He reached down and from the stones at his feet selected a flat one. Again he demonstrated to the child a correct grip, lightly between thumb and forefinger. Then he lowered his right shoulder, and with a casual throw sent the stone skipping across the water. His son worked his round pink mouth in delight.

At the splashing sound the adult duck turned to study the flash of light and ripples over the water. The hindmost duckling skidded into one of his brothers. He fluffed his amber neck feathers, and babbled a warning to save his pride.

From the pathway the young woman called irritably; "For Heaven's sakes, how long is this going to continue? I'm not waiting forever. I'll take my walk alone then." She turned, and clumped over the knoll.

(continued on pg. 34)

THE TWO MAIN TRAPS

by Gianni Asti(T/A:ID)

We begin our reflections for young people by turning to what Don Bosco wrote in the introduction of his prayer book for youngsters: *The Companion of Youth*. In those opening remarks the reader notices the heart of a father shining through:

"My dear boys, I love you with all my heart and it is enough for me to know that you are young to love you as much as I do. There will certainly be writers better than I, others more scholarly than I but you will hardly find someone who loves you as much as I do in Jesus Christ and who so dearly desires your true happiness. I love you because in your heart you still cherish the treasure of virtue which is everything but if you lose it you become the most unfortunate human being in the whole wide world.

The Lord is always with you and he will continue to be with you if you continue to put into practice these few suggestions that will help you to save your soul and bring greater glory to God. That is the only purpose of this book." (The Companion of Youth)

After these overtures of affection these are his first suggestions.

Serve The Lord With Gladness

"The devil usually uses two principal traps to draw youngsters away from virtue. The first is to put into their minds the idea that serving the Lord means embarking on a life of sadness and seriousness and foregoing fun and pleasure. That is so untrue, my dear boys. I want to teach you that the path of Christian life is also the path to happiness. That



ADVICE TO HIS BOYS

DON BOSCO'S

path will reveal to you what real fun is and what true pleasure consists in, so that you can exclaim with the Prophet David: 'Let us serve the Lord in holy joy,' and that is the purpose of this book."

We are aware that Don Bosco's teachings were the fruit of his own experience. If there was any youngster from the little hamlet of Becchi that had every reason to be sad it surely was him. He was orphaned at two; he came from a very poor family with no prospects of a job except to work in the fields and no hope of a future. Yet there was no happier lad in all of Becchi than he and his secret was to live in the presence of God his Father, who watched over him and his dear ones and that thought made him truly serene and happy among his companions.

He himself recounts in his *Memoirs* how he spent the evenings on feast days. He made

all those who had gathered in the little courtyard in front of his house, youngsters and elders alike, recite the Rosary then he would get up on a chair and repeat the sermon that the chaplain gave that morning. This was followed by some tricks of skill which thoroughly entertained his audience after which the evening concluded with a brief prayer.

"At eleven I began to perform some slight of hand tricks. I could leap into the air and walk on my hands. I jumped and danced on a tight-rope like a professional acrobat... a preacher turned professional acrobat."

Another touching episode that moved the heart of the twelve-year-old Johnny was his meeting with the young cleric Cafasso at the little church of St. Peter not too far from his home at Becchi.

Cafasso was four years older than he and would later become his teacher and spiritual director, his confessor and his benefactor. He was standing by the church door waiting for the evening services. Johnny, curious to know who he was, went up to him and invited him to come and take part in the festivities:

- Father, would you care to see what's going on at our feast? I'd like to act as your guide.

We know Cafasso's famous answer:

- My dear friend, the entertainments of a priest are church ceremonies.

Johnny was taken aback:

- But Father, though what you say is true, there's a time for everything, a time to pray and a time to play.

One notices from this reply the gradual maturing of a spirituality of joy already taking root in the heart of young Johnny Bosco.

At 17, while he lived below the staircase at the café Pianta in Chieri where he studied and read and slept a few hours at night, he founded among his Glee Club (*Società dell'Allegria*) his companions.

Each of the members promised to organize games, hold conversations, read books that contributed to the delight and happiness of all. They had to observe a simple rule that comprised of just two articles:

1. Doing nothing bad nor using language unworthy of a Christian.

2. The perfect observance of one's scholastic and religious duties.

This would be the same rule that he would later propose to Dominic Savio which would help him to become a saint and which he in turn would spread among his companions.

We know that Don Bosco promoted among the boys at Valdocco an atmosphere of joy which was born out of a deep friendship with Jesus and a serious fidelity to one's daily duties and the typical external manifestations of lively youthful behaviour.

During those famous autumn walks that he organised for his best boys one saw the expression of utter joy that he created for them, through the Eucharistic celebrations, moments of prayer, games, jokes and the music he and the boys created as the happy band entered village after village.

Satan's Old Trap

By doing this Don Bosco knew how to counter the old trap that Satan had been laying from the beginning of time; those temptations with which he insinuated Adam and Eve,

convincing them that they would be like gods by establishing for themselves what they thought was good or evil.

So many Christians through their disgraceful lives have disfigured the true face of the Father that Jesus came to reveal and the joy comes from loving and following him.

While we know all this, we still immoderately seek those pleasures and amusements that are against the law of love that God has placed in the heart of every man bringing sadness, despondency and often leading to self-destruction.

Our teenagers and young adults captivated by the sensuality, consumerism and individualism that they call true freedom only seek their companions when they are lonely only to find that when they lower their masks their friends have deceived them.

We ought to convince our youngsters that true joy comes from God and we need to give proof of this by the witness of our lives. We should learn from Don Bosco to recreate for them alternative places where they can come together to enjoy some healthy recreation other than what is proposed to them by this consumerist society.

The Illusion of a Long Life

Don Bosco goes on:

"The other trap is the hope of a long life so that one may seek conversions in one's old age or at the moment of our death. Beware, my dear boys, there were many who were deceived in that way. Who assures us that we will reach a ripe old age? Life and death are in the hands of the Lord and he can do what he likes with it."

It is so easy, indulging oneself in the ways of evil, quieting our consciences, postponing our

conversion till we reach old age as if we can decide the moment of our death.

Think of disastrous Saturday nights when so many youngsters, inebriated with alcohol, dazed by drugs end their days by the roadside; they should be severely and seriously warned.

- Were they prepared to meet God? How did they arrive at this encounter?

To think that they will be able to repent when they reach their old age is a terrible illusion. We see some elderly people numbed by evil or by age, confused because of sedatives just sustaining their life but no longer lucid. Can you say that they are ready to meet God?

We offer you this final admonition of Don Bosco:

"What if God grants you a long life. Listen to the strong warning that comes from Him: 'The path that a man starts out on in his youth is the path he continues on up to his old age and up to his death.'"

If you begin living a good life when you are young, you will remain good during your later years. Your death will be holy and you will be eternally happy thereafter.

On the contrary, if you allow vices to take possession of you during your youth they will accompany you up to the day you die. So that this tragedy does not happen to you, I present you a rule of life that is quick and easy, it will bring great consolation to your parents, you will be a pride to your country, a good citizen of earth, and one day a happy citizen of heaven."

We will consider this rule of life that he has mentioned in our next encounter. □

PARIS

Two of the many thousands who joined the Catholic Church this Easter are a mother and daughter from Japan. Their story is unique because the family's father is a Shinto priest.

The Eglises d'Asie, the news agency of the Foreign Missions of Paris, reported the story of Ito Miyuki, 38, and her daughter, Kotone, 5, who will be baptized into the Catholic faith.

The celebration took place in the parish of Yonezawa in the prefecture of Yamagata.

"My home is a Shinto temple; my work is that of a miko," she told UCANews, referring to a woman assistant in a Shinto temple.

With only a few days left before her baptism, Miyuki continues to play sacred music during her husband's ceremonies. After her baptism, she plans to continue to do so.

Later, she returned to live with her parents in Yamagata, where she met Haruhiko, a Shinto priest, and they were married.

Her knowledge of the Christian faith was then very weak, though existent. She attended a Catholic high school, where she was fascinated by the story of the life and work of Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

Three years after her wedding, during a trip to India, she visited the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta and was blessed by the founder, who gave her a rosary, which she still treasures.

However, Miyuki's conversion came later. In 2008, during a dinner, she began to cough up blood. The doctors diagnosed cancer of the

pharynx, telling her it was terminal.

Without being able to explain it, the image of Mother Teresa came to Miyuki's mind and she said to herself: "I want to be baptized before I die!"

On leaving the hospital, she began searching to see how she could receive this sacrament, but someone close to the Church told her that, being a miko, she should reconsider her decision.

However, she persisted with her desire and contacted the parish of Yonezawa, where she was received by the team in charge of the catechumenate.

Two months later, when she was growing used to her illness, her cancer disappeared.

"My life was saved by Jesus Christ; I want to spend the rest of my life in the Church," she thought at the time, realizing that she had become "spiritually thirsty."

For some time Miyuki considered the possibility of abandoning her functions in the shrine, but she was dissuaded by a priest of the parish and the team of laymen that support her.

In regard to her daughter, Kotone herself went to see the priest to ask to be baptized.

"I want to know Jesus," she said at the age of 5. "I love Jesus and I love Mary."

Miyuki's husband has no objection to the prospect of the forthcoming baptism of his wife and daughter. In fact, he says he feels profoundly fortunate.

"Considering my position, I can't be baptized myself," he

explained. "But for my own part, I do wish I could. This area has a shrinking population, but despite this, all the residents continue to support Shinto festivals with monetary offerings. I feel I must do what I can to meet the needs of those who do so much to protect this shrine."

After Easter and the baptisms, the Ito family travelled to France where, in the company of several Catholic priests, they went on pilgrimage to Lourdes.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

This Easter, thousands became Catholic, including a man who almost lost his life five times.

The U.S. bishops' conference shared the story of Jeremy Feldbusch, 30, from Blairsville, Pennsylvania.

Feldbusch was in the armed services in Iraq, and on April 3, 2003, he was wounded with shrapnel from the conflict, which resulted in blindness in both eyes and traumatic brain injury.

He was expected to die shortly after, or if he lived, to sustain extensive brain damage. Doctors put him into a coma with a ventilator for six weeks in order to reduce brain swelling.

The medical professionals attempted to remove the ventilator five times, but on each attempt, Feldbusch "died" and had to be resuscitated. On the sixth try, he finally regained consciousness.

The patient, who had been baptized a Methodist, asked his father, "Why did God take my eyesight?"

His father replied with a different question, "Why did God let you live?"

The bishops' conference

reported that through the process of rehabilitation, Feldbusch "began to think that things happen for a reason and resolved to spend his life helping other wounded service members."

He decided to enter the Catholic Church, and will be received on Saturday, the 7th anniversary of his life-changing injury in Iraq.

The conference press release noted that thousands more joined Feldbusch, with especially high numbers of new Catholics in the South and Southwest regions of the United States.

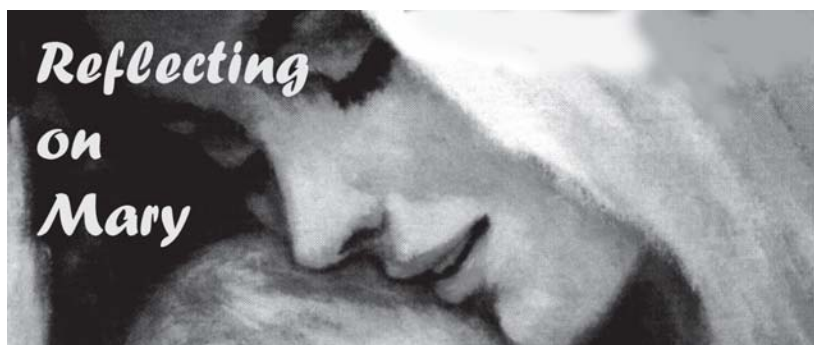
In Texas, the Archdiocese of San Antonio is reporting that 1,112 people will enter the Church. A good number of these are young people, who have already reached the age of reason, including 214 child catechumens and 124 candidates.

The Diocese of Fort Worth in that same state will welcome around the same number of new Catholics.

Other dioceses who are expecting over a thousand new members are: Detroit, Michigan (1,225); Cincinnati, Ohio (1,049); Denver, Colorado (1,102); Arlington, Virginia (1,100); Washington, D.C. (1,150).

In the Archdiocese of Washington, 18 of those preparing to enter the Church are students from St. Augustine School, the oldest African American school in the nation's capital.

The conference communiqué noted that the Catholic Church, which is the largest denomination in the United States, with over 68 million members, has shown a 1.5% increase in membership numbers this past year. ■



DO YOU KNOW MARY?

by Barbara Johannsen

We all thought Tommy was going to die, then we gathered around his bed and began praying for him."

James Hooper glanced at the two teenage girls, as he dropped into the empty chair on the end of the row of seats. His plane was delayed. He glanced at his watch. He'd be late for his daughter's birthday party. He sighed and pinned his eyes on the message board above the reservation desk.

"And our prayers were answered: Tommy recovered," the girl said.

James glanced around at the girls. They seemed content to sit and wait. He wondered if they were on his flight. He made eye contact with one of them the smaller of the two and she smiled. He forced a smile in return.

"It was a miracle. The doctors said so."

James turned his gaze away. Maybe the parents of the girls were sitting nearby. He glanced around trying to spot them. It was

dangerous travelling, and young girls shouldn't be expected to take trips without adult supervision. He glanced at the girls again. Even the buddy system wasn't always a safe idea.

"Do you know Mary?"

Surprise flickered across James' face at the girl's question. She stared at him with wide blue eyes, awaiting his answer.

"Well?" she prompted.

James smiled tentatively. The last thing he wanted to do was to become involved in a discussion, with a teenage girl in an airport. He simply wanted his flight to be on time, so he could be home before his own daughter had her tenth birthday, without him.

"No. I don't think I know Mary," he replied, his voice sounding a bit coarse.

"Do you know Jesus?" she quickly asked.

James stared at the girl. She appeared the typical teenager. Her long hair was gathered in a ponytail on the back of her head.

She wore jeans and a too-big sweater, along with colorful tennis shoes.

"Don't bother the nice man, Angela."

A tall man in a gray suit seemed to appear from out of nowhere. He picked up a small tote bag sitting at the girls' feet, and instructed them to accompany him. The two scrambled out of their chairs and hurried off, leaving James to stare after them.

A part of him was glad they were gone. He glanced at the message board again, hoping something had changed and his plane might be coming in soon. He saw nothing different. The status of the flight remained delayed.

He looked around for something to read, a newspaper, perhaps, or a book of some sort. He'd spotted the newspaper vending machines clear at the far end of the terminal, when he'd gotten off the plane from Saratoga and at that time he figured he'd be boarding the last flight he'd need to get him home to L.A.

He sighed. Things were unpredictable or at least airplane flights were unpredictable. He gazed about the terminal, taking in the wide expanse of polished floors and the clusters of people either sitting or crowded together talking.

He felt lonely, suddenly. What if he didn't make it home for Melody's birthday party? He'd always been there before, always helping with the party guests. One year he



The Holy Family, Caesar van Everdingen (1617-1678), Museum Catharijncourt, Utrecht

dressed as a clown and made balloon animals for everyone.

If he weren't there, Melody would always remember that she'd celebrated her tenth birthday without her dad.

I can't let that happen.

He felt on edge, suddenly. He glanced around the terminal again, hoping to find a solution to his problem.

That's silly.

He gave a short chuckle. He had a ticket on an airplane. There wasn't a faster way of covering fourteen hundred miles than to fly. If only that plane would arrive.

He watched two men walking in his direction. The two chairs where the teenagers had sat were empty. Perhaps they would sit down beside him and he'd have adults to talk to.

"Are those seats taken?" one

of the men asked, stopping beside James.

James shook his head and the two proceeded to stow their briefcases beneath the chairs and be seated.

"Is this your magazine?"

One man pushed a slick backed magazine into James' lap, and released it before James could answer. The girl must have left it, he thought. Well, now he had something to read at least.

The two men seated beside James proceeded to don earphones and listen to CD's on portable players. James turned his eyes on the magazine he held.

QUEEN OF ALL HEARTS, he read. He'd never heard of it. But then, he wasn't such a big fan of magazines. He rather preferred mystery novels, when he had the time to read, which wasn't often given his line of work as a medical instruments salesman.

He laid the magazine in his lap and began turning its pages, only somewhat glancing at the large print headings. If only that plane would arrive, so he could head home. He'd have no need to try and while away the time.

"Have you ever wondered about Mary?" he murmured as his fingers halted on the magazine pages. He thought of the inquisitive teenager as he glanced at the story. A Sunday school class was having a discussion about Mary being chosen as Jesus' mother.

James felt his stomach suddenly tremor. The child had read the story, perhaps moments before he took the seat beside her.



What a coincidence, he thought. He began reading the story, short but interesting. And quite thought provoking, he agreed.

How would it feel to be chosen by God to do such an important thing? Could he possibly imagine such joy, as Mary must have felt?

He thought then of the child's question to him: "Do you know Mary?" Had she been trying to understand the great significance of such an event? He felt his temples suddenly throb. How could anyone possibly understand how Mary must have felt? He closed his eyes for a moment, willing the approaching headache to subside. He thought again of the girl whose magazine he now

held.

Funny, he suddenly thought, giving his head a shake. He hadn't thought of God in years. And Mary-well-he didn't even know where his Rosary was. It was tucked in a bureau drawer, perhaps.

An overwhelming sadness seemed to engulf him. He felt very tired, all of a sudden. He had worked eighty hours that week, then managed to book a flight home, remembering that Melody would turn ten on Friday. He felt almost displaced, removed from his otherwise normal life.

What is a normal life?

Four years ago, he had lost his job as a hospital administrator in his hometown. Given his age, he'd had a difficult time finding something else. Finally, he settled for peddling medical instruments to regional hospitals, then he gained a promotion and became a supervisor. But the promotion had come with drawbacks. He had to travel great distances to oversee other salesmen working for the company. His life and that of his family, had been turned upside down.

He felt emotionally confused – the story of Mary and her marvellous work for God. No wonder his life seemed so chaotic. He had lost sight of the most important thing in his life. He had abandoned God. He raised his head and scanned the terminal looking for the girl. If only he could see her again. He'd thank her for calling something so significant to his attention.

"Precious Mary, Mother of Jesus, please forgive me," he murmured in a soft whisper.

He rose from his chair, clutching

the magazine in one hand. Perhaps the little girl was still in the airport. He searched the crowds, sporadic amid the wide building, then began walking in the direction he'd seen the man in the grey suit leading her.

Briefly he considered his notion to find the girl and return her magazine. Some would think him silly. It was only a magazine.

"It's more than that."

He walked great lengths across the tiled floors, searching, and not laying eyes on the girl. Perhaps she boarded a plane, or maybe the man in the grey suit had been her father and had taken her home. He thought up all sorts of scenarios for the absence of the child.

He stopped suddenly, peering down at the magazine. Perhaps he wasn't meant to find the child. Perhaps he was supposed to keep the magazine and read the beautiful story about Mary, over and over.

He smiled suddenly, a broad face splitting grin that lit up his mood. Yes.

That was it. The child, perhaps, was supposed to leave the magazine behind perhaps so he could find the answers to her candid queries.

Flight 417 to Los Angeles now boarding at gate 17."

Joy leapt to James' heart with the announcement. He was going home. He would be with Melody on her tenth birthday. "Sweet merciful Mary. Thank you," he prayed, bowing his head. "And please, keep that child safe-wherever she may be."□

LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

Our deep gratitude to the Lord and the intercession of his beloved Mother for all the blessings received. *A & C Rodricks, Australia*
Mamma Mary, thank you so much for your great protection and especially for giving me the courage to face my exams and for helping me pass in my first year of B.Sc. Nursing. *Anupriya, Baby, Jabalpur*
My sincere thanks to Our Lord Jesus and Mother Mary for curing me of a heart problem and for all the other blessings and favours granted to us. *Arun D'Souza, Thane (W)*

I was suffering with high fever for 2 weeks. Later this was diagnosed as pneumonia, but I was blessed with sound sleep in spite of the fever. I spent a week in hospital and recovered quickly. Thanks to our dear Mother and the recitation of my daily rosary.

Mrs. Valerie Fernandes, Goa

Our sincere thanks for special favours received especially during a time of crisis of my son. I am grateful to Mary Help of Christians and all the saints.

Isaac H. Dias, Goa

Thank you Mother Mary, Help of Christians and all the saints for the many favours received especially for the good job and Nigel's continual work and business.

A.M.Q. Milton Keynes, UK

GRATEFUL TO MARY

Some years ago I had taken my daughter Savita to Vailankanni and from there to Trivandrum for a month. Since we missed the only direct bus we decided to go to Nagercoil and then take the next bus to Trivandrum. The bus developed a snag and we were forced to spend the night at Trichy. This was almost midway. Early the next morning we missed the first bus because it was already full. I was upset and even blamed God for this delay. I was hoping to reach in time for the evening Mass at St. Joseph's Cathedral. Surprisingly the next bus arrived and we left even ahead of schedule. After about a long journey we were shocked to see that the morning bus had overturned and was lying at the side of the road. I was so ashamed that I had even grumbled against God and I thanked Our Lady for having protected us and prevented us from having taken that ill-fated bus.

Maxim Ferrao, Vashi, New Mumbai

My sincere thanks to the Divine Mercy and Our Blessed Mother for curing my daughter from a severe pain in her stomach and for keeping my grandson unharmed when a heavy television set fell on him. We also thank Our Blessed Mother Mary for all the many blessings bestowed on our family.

From a Devotee, Canada

Thank you dear Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for all the favours and blessings received.

Joyce Lobo, Goa

Our sincere thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the innumerable favours granted to our family and for healing me and my son from malaria.

Prisca Pereira, 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 visas were delayed due to some reason. On getting the visas, it was difficult to get a flight as all flights were going full. I started praying the 'Three Hail Marys' as I always do in times of need. Mother Mary heard my prayer and everything went smoothly

Ms. M. Cardozo, Mumbai

My sincere gratitude to Our Lady for helping me get good marks in my examination.

M. Menezes, Goa

Thank you Mother for helping me in my exams.

Ciena, Mumbai

Thank you dear Mother Mary for all the graces received through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys, and also for helping and saving my brother-in-law Clifford Simoes from a critical health condition. Our sincere thanks for all the favours received.

Antonieta Simoes, Macau, South China

The constant recitation of the 3 Hail Marys has helped us to complete our legal/bank formalities for a home loan within a time frame of 3 days, which otherwise seemed impossible. My sincere thanks to Our Blessed Mother for her assistance.

R. Poppen, Mumbai

THE THREE HAIL MARYS

In March 2009 while working, I had a sudden loss of vision in my right eye. On my way home I ran into my family doctor and I told her what had happened. At the suggestion of some of my folks I visited an eye specialist who checked me thoroughly. I was told that there was nothing wrong with my eyes. My family doctor sent me for further tests and MRI test of the brain. Everything came back negative. Further ultra-sound tests on my neck revealed that I very narrowly escaped a stroke. The arteries on my right side of the neck were completely blocked and there was nothing they could do and the left side was 80% blocked. I was referred to the neurosurgeon and had two options either a by-pass or a stem, but before that I was put on aspirin and some blood pressure pills and asked to see me again after a month to do the scan again. In those moments I called out to Mother Mary with my devotion of the "Three Hail Marys." After a month I went for the scan and I was called by the Neurologist who told me that he did not know why the left artery which was 80% blocked was now showing 50% block. He suggested that I continue with my medication and do an ultra sound after 6 months. As suggested I went for the ultrasound on January 4, 2010 trusting in Mother Mary. To this day they have not called me and I know for sure if there was anything wrong they would have called me immediately. I truly believe that I am healed. Mother Mary is surely taking care of me and my entire family.

L. Nunes -Canada

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

Glory to God in the highest for the countless favours and blessings received through the powerful intercession of our loving mother, Mary Help of Christians, St. Don Bosco, St. Dominic Savio and the servant of God, Mamma Margaret.

Karis Rodrigues, Bangalore

My sincere gratitude to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary Help of Christians, for helping my son pass his second officer's examination in the United Kingdom and for many other favours received.

Cedric Gondalves, Goa

My sincere thanks to Mother Mary and Don Bosco for helping me pass my first semester BE Examination with a distinction and for all the other favours received. Please be with us always, O Mother.

Cleto D'Souza, Mangalore

Dear Mother Mary and Dominic Savio, thank you for blessing us with a child after many years, it was indeed a miracle and I thank you for the safe delivery.

Mrs. Gonsalves, UAE

My grateful thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco for the many favours received and especially giving me 90 beautiful years of life in this world.

Maria Lina Nunes, Canada

I am grateful to Mary Help of Christians, St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the blessings received through their intercession.

Mrs. Mahnaz Mandegari, Iran

My thanks to Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the miraculous delivery of a baby boy named Nathan to our daughter.

Mrs. R. Clement, London, UK

Thank you dear Mother Mary and Don Bosco for Deo's posting to Mumbai, Sonu's new job acceptance, Tinku's new job. Guide and protect us always.

Mrs. Gundewadi, Mumbai

Sunday Walk by Gary Thomson - continued from pg. 22

Quietly the father turned to his son. "Now you try it."

Slowly the child worked his fingers around the stone, trying to imitate his father's gestures. His lips pursed, and moved in unison with his chubby fingers. Then he stood erect.

With a gasp of energy and hope he flung the stone toward the water. It flew in a high arc and plopped in a silvery spray several paces from them. The child stood amazed, watching the ripples spread in widening circles. Then he hopped several times, squealing his joy.

With a slow tenderness his father drew the boy into his arms. He whispered into the ruffled white hair. "A wonderful shot, beautiful to see. You'll skip one soon, my lad. We'll keep trying." He looked along the knoll where his wife had gone. "We'll keep trying, and we'll get it right. Then mom will see that stone fly over the water."

The ducks were angling towards them, a rollicking brown robed procession; and the sound of their gabbling rose over the water like a hymn of praise. □

THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



My sincere thanks to Our Blessed Mother and St. Dominic Savio for the safe and normal delivery of my daughter and the gift of a healthy baby boy who they have named Dominic.

Mrs. D. Lowe, Bangalore

Our sincere thanks the Infant Jesus, Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for blessing us with a healthy baby boy. I was wearing the Dominic Savio scapular throughout my pregnancy.

Phillip and Nina Chappells, Sharjah

My heartfelt thanks to dear St. Dominic Savio for helping me bring our baby 'Ian' into this world safely.

Christopher & Caroline Pereira, Mumbai

Our belated but sincere thanks to almighty God, the Most Sacred Heart

of Jesus, Mother Mary, St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for protecting my son when he had a narrow escape. Please keep all of us under your watchful care.

Mona, Mumbai

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

Vijay Aranha, Udipi

Thank you dear Dominic Savio for giving me a healthy baby...I have been wearing his scapular all through my pregnancy and he has helped me with his grace.

Marissa Naik, Mumbai

Our belated thanks to St. Dominic Savio for the delivery of a healthy baby girl despite of the doctor's predictions of a mentally challenged child. I have written 'belated' because my daughter is now 21. I ask

Dominic Savio to intercede for her still.

Goretti and Alvito D'Silva, Mumbai

Many thanks for the precious gift of a baby boy, Myron Savio D'Costa and please protect our son.

Moses and Chiffa D'Costa, Goa

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

JUNE 2010

Holy Father's General Intention: *That every national and transnational institution may strive to guarantee respect for human life from conception to natural death.*

Holy Father's Missionary Intention: *That the Churches in Asia, which constitute a "little flock" among non-Christian populations, may know how to communicate the Gospel and give joyful witness to their adherence to Christ.*

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MARY WAS THERE

As a diabetic I've frequently fallen due to fluctuating sugar levels. So far after a few seconds I have regained consciousness as the sugar level swings upwards. For this reason I am not permitted to ride any vehicle not even a cycle. A couple of months ago while riding my cycle I fell unconscious on a public road but a few seconds later regained consciousness. It was a miracle! There were no motor vehicles on the road at the time. I had no limbs broken or any other injuries, just a few slight bruises. I struggled to get up with the help of an unknown friend who quickly assisted me. Thinking back, it is without doubt, the Holy Virgin who controlled my fall and kept me free from any danger or injury. How absolutely necessary it is that we place ourselves in Her motherly care!

Jude P. Bayer, Kerala

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

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

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

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