

# DON BOSCO'S MADONNA

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*"The family is certainly  
a grace of God  
through which transpires  
what God himself is:  
Love – an entirely free love  
that sustains boundless  
fidelity, even in times  
of difficulty or dejection."*

(Pope Benedict XVI)

**Cover: Don Bosco and  
His Work for Youth**

*designed by William Fernandes*



## From The Editor's Desk

### The Gift

It was always the gifts that made Christmas so exciting. They were that part of the celebrations that was very personal - just for me. I revelled in the whole Christmas scene: the brightly lit shops, Christmas trees with their sparkling lights, the flood of colourful greeting cards that came in the mail, the purchase and preparation of sweets and rich foods, and finally, Christmas eve; but even a glorious Christmas dinner came a poor second to the presents. They were a wonder!

It wasn't just that I still had my presents long after the decorations had been removed, the cakes and sweets were eaten, and the family guests had gone home to return again the next time Christmas came around. Again, it wasn't the practical and useful gifts: the shoes, the socks, shirts and pullovers; there was nothing exciting about them; they were so regular and familiar, they were the stuff of everyday life. It was that gift-wrapped package that gave no clue to its contents, but which promised that it just might contain whatever I then most earnestly desired and was so afraid to even hope for, let alone speak about or ask for. It was the unexpected fulfilment of my heart's desire - now, that was really exciting!

As I grew older and adult cynicism gradually dismissed the Santa Claus story, nothing could ever erode my wonder at gifts (as I understood them). After all, gifts were real, and some good soul had looked into my heart and liked me, even loved me enough to give me what I most wanted. The little boy in me would be much older and a lot less selfish as I came to realize just how wrong that adult cynicism was and that there *was* some "bearer of gifts", who did know my heart's desires and loved me so much that s/he gave me those wondrous gifts.

It is from God that all good gifts come and the Christmas story captures the wonder of the great gift of his Son, who became man and lived among us. I was recently reflecting on how much easier it was for me as a youngster to accept that my Christmas presents were just for me but how much more difficult it is for me as an adult to recapture that full acceptance that God's gift of himself is (also) just for me.

A gift is no gift unless I accept it, wear it and use it! It is the best and only way of assuring the kind giver that I really loved the gift and acknowledge the love shown in the gift. - It is striking just how often Christ in his parables regrets how people failed to take gifts with open arms; whether it is the man who got the talent and buried it or the elder brother who could not welcome home his lost, prodigal brother. Christ, however, marvelled at the poor widow who placed her last two small coins in the Temple poor box. She was giving her life that others might have life. Now there was a woman after his own heart.

*Fr. Ian Douulton sdb*

# 1. A BUS RIDE WITH A DIFFERENCE

*by Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss*

**I**n this fresh series I would like to present examples of how the presence of the Risen Lord can make a difference in our lives and world, provided we acquire the skill of tuning in to his chosen wave-length. As I have done previously, in this series too I start with a story and weave around it a few reflections which bring out the power of Christ's resurrection for us today.

## What Life is all About!

"A few years ago as an employee of an international company selling computer devices, I had to travel a lot as part of my work. My attitude at that time was typical of most young employees viz. 'how to make more money by solving technical problems.' My life was a closed circuit system enveloping only my own world and I lived very much like a robot that worked in a purely mechanical way.

On one of my work trips, I sensed that for some strange reason, everything was different that day. For no understandable motive, at the airport I decided to take the stairs down to a different exit and walked out. What met my gaze stunned me: a beautiful landscaped space that I had never noticed before. I let go a couple of buses as I was fascinated and wanted to enjoy the scenery. Finally I got on to a bus that would extend this 'difference' all through my life!

Choosing to sit somewhere in

the middle of the coach, I found myself next to a young boy, a strange fellow carrying an unusual pile of suitcases and bags, as if he was moving. Not wanting to be disturbed, I relaxed silently in my seat but in the twinkle of an eye, the lad turned to me with one of the most authentic smiles I had ever seen from a stranger, while extending his hand in a friendly greeting. Inevitably we got to talking and I soon learnt more about my friend. "You can call me John. I'm 20 years old and I'm here because I want to achieve my biggest dream ever," he confided calmly.

Having lost his dad ten years ago his mother re-married and then began the most harrowing part of his life-story. "Since then," he continued nonchalantly, "I've been living all over the country for the last ten years. I've lived on the street, I've eaten frequently out of garbage bins but have also known many people who have been wonderful and kind to me. I have been lucky, and learned a lot from life through these years." After a short respite, he continued, "My grandpa was a general of the army. He left me this," he said proudly pointing to a long knife with a gold handle. This was the best memory of his childhood and was priceless to him because every time he was faced with something difficult in life, he would touch the knife and feel better and know that no matter what, he could face that adversity

successfully. Finally, he came to the reason he was on that bus! For the last ten years, all the time, every moment of every day, he had only one thing on his mind, to join the army like his grandpa. He was on his way to the army school where his grandfather studied a long time ago and he swore that he would persist until he succeeded. "I vowed to follow this dream and be happy every day of my life," he asserted, beaming with confidence.

As the bus reached his stop, he stood up, took all his bags, extended his hand again to shake mine and with a big smile on his face told me, "it has been a pleasure, I hope to see you again" and disappeared in a second.

I shook his hands tightly, unable to say much at this point. I was choked up with emotion. As I mused silently the rest of my journey, I could not but realize that from then on my life would be different and a young homeless man of 20 years was the miracle worker. It didn't take me long to understand what a great person he was because of his unwavering faith all this time: faith in himself and in Life's assignment to him in spite of such a poor start!

### **Behold, I Make All Things New**

Following on the cruel and shameful death of Jesus on a forlorn cross at Calvary, the disciples were all huddled together in the Upper Room, feeling pretty much sorry for themselves! "We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel," they reminisced. But that was all a matter of the past – they had deemed it best to return to their former way of life and pick up the shattered rem-

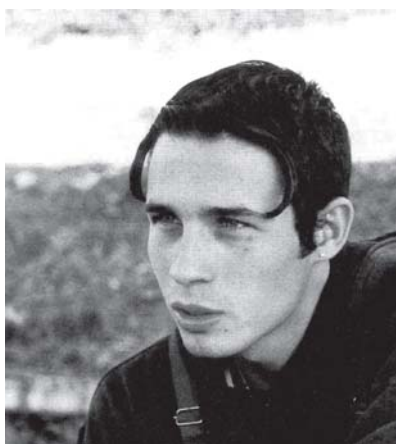
nants of their lives before it was too late! This attitude of the early disciples is so typical of Christians even today. The slightest set-back or adversity is enough to send them scuttling from novena to novena – and they will not give up until the ominous clouds of suffering have dissipated. How refreshingly different it is to meet with someone who believes in Life's plans picks up his cross and marches to a different drum!



All down the ages, the general human pattern of behaviour seems to be somewhat like this: most people like to see themselves as helpless and powerless or even find themselves behaving like that in situations that highlight their inadequacy. No sooner this happens than they immediately turn to God pleading for his powerful help. And their expectations are that they will receive the complete solution on a platter, presented to them as a gratuitous gift from the Almighty! Theirs is only to pray and to await the gift!

However, having conquered sin and death through his dying-rising Jesus has ushered in another

kind of spiritual world order. In this new approach, he provides us with all the power and tools capable of handling every possible situation we could find ourselves in. In Luke's Gospel, he reminds us, "how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Lk. 11:13). Now, the Holy Spirit is to be understood in terms of power, energy and not as a readymade solution to any and every problem we encounter.



### **Endemic to Human Nature**

We notice this same attitude very clearly in the lives of the first disciples. The two who were on their way to Emmaus complain to 'the Stranger', "Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and

found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him" (Lk 24:21-24). Their reference to the 'third day' seems to indicate that they believed that 'on the third day' God would reverse the negative situation of Christ's death and restore him to them – in the same way as he was before! Had it happened 'their way' the women should have met Jesus (whole and entire) in the tomb – but 'him they did not see!' (v. 24).

Although they do not express it in exactly those terms, their hope was similar to what Thomas expressed much more boldly and perhaps 'crudely' – "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe" (Jn 20:25). They were looking for a 'ready-made' revived Jesus who would then continue with them as before and they would from then on experience no more 'problems.' Hence, Jesus decided to take them through the entire Scriptures and show them the real meaning of his risen Presence to his disciples!

### **Our Collaboration Needed**

So today when we face difficulties big or small, the Lord does not promise us more than the gift of the Holy Spirit who will lead us to the full truth. He it is who will tell us what is to be done so that God's kingdom may flourish in the midst of that painful crisis. This means that we would need to listen carefully to the instructions of the Spirit, and venture out into the deep, as some of those early disciples actually did when the Risen Lord suggested that they cast their nets to the right (Jn. 21).

*(Continued on pg. 22)*





## VOCATION PROMOTION THE SAFARI OF MY LIFE!

*Fr. Mathias D'Cunha, sdb*

*Administrator and Catechist at Don Bosco, Alirajpur, M.P.*

**I** was born in East Africa to my loving parents Francis and Flavia, the first of three children, in a small village called Kiambu-Kenya. Ours was a very God-fearing family hence there prevailed a great love for prayer, the Eucharist and the Church.

From the time I was very young I wanted to become a priest. After completing my primary studies in Kenya I came to Goa in May 1963 where I continued my secondary education at the famous St. Anthony's, Monte-de-Guirin, run by the Capuchins (OFM-Cap).

In 1966 Fr. Peter Lourdes, a Salesian from Kolkata and a well-known psychologist came to invite boys to join the Salesians and he put me in touch with Fr. Alessi, who was a great missionary and Rector of Don Bosco Lonavla. In June 1968, I started my safari at the Aspirantate of Lonavla. The two years I spent there revealed to me the beauty of the Salesian School over all the schools that I had attended.

From there, I was sent to the Novitiate, which was in Yercaud, in South India and my father had the pleasure of helping me don the religious habit on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov., 1970. I made my first profession on 24 May, 1971.

After completing my regency and my graduation, in 1978 I went to Bangalore to finish my last four years of theology and on 19 December, 1981 (anniversary of Goa's liberation), together with three others, I was ordained at Don Bosco,



Panjim, Goa. The following day I witnessed the nuptials of my brother as I celebrated my first thanksgiving Mass.

In August 1982 I volunteered to work in Africa and I spent 3 years in Kenya and 8 years in Tanzania. Living with the people of Africa and learning Kiswahili, the local language was a very rewarding experience. In July 1993 I returned to India and that same year my mother expired with me at her bedside.

The Lord accompanied me along this my Salesian and priestly safari. Working for poor youngsters in the Salesian way has been a very rewarding experience and I would earnestly want someone to take my place before the Lord calls me home. If you enjoy working with youngsters, there's no place like the Salesian Congregation. Come and see! □

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## **SALESIAN SAINT OF THE MONTH**

### **FR. CONSTANTINE VENDRAME 1893 - 1957**

**C**onstantine Vendrame was born at San Martino di Colle Cumberto in the province of Treviso, Italy, on 27<sup>th</sup> August 1893. From the time he was very young he displayed great intelligence and goodness. In 1913 he entered the Salesian novitiate at Ivrea. For some time he was conscripted in the Army. In March 1929 he was ordained a priest and in October that same year he received the missionary crucifix in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians at Turin and at the age of 31 he left for India. As soon as he reached Shillong he immersed himself in the study of the local language which he mastered in a very short time. Within five years the parishes that were entrusted to him grew remarkably. The baptisms increased from just 400 to 1449. He always sought to keep in touch with his flock. He listened to their problems and befriended them by telling them stories from the life of Jesus. He realised the importance of women in Khasi culture and established groups of women calling them "Khasi Apostles." Already in those days he began to use the modern means of mass communication to evangelize the villages. He screened for them the life of Jesus and these projections



drew great crowds. Like a good Salesian he also started festive Oratories on holidays where he taught hundreds of children and through them he succeeded in entering their families. In this sense he could be compared to St. Francis Xavier or St. Paul. He was very humble by nature and a great man of prayer. He had a great devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and he built two shrines in His honour one at Mawlai and the other at Wahiajer. Like Don Bosco he too had a tender devotion to Mary Help of Christians. He dedicated himself to work in North East India up to the end of his life. He had stretched himself threadbare till he had no more energy left. He died a holy death at a hospital in Dibrugarh, on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 1957.

The Diocesan Process of Beati-  
fication and Canonisation began  
on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2006 □

# HONEST AND GENEROUS LIVES

by Carlo Broccardo

*Here's how John the Baptist would advise you to use his admonitions to begin the New Year*

**E**ver year during the season of Advent, as we prepare for Christmas, we must meet John the Baptist. The passages concerning him from St. Luke are longer and so his teaching extended to two Sundays. In Advent we were given John's admonition to the people telling them what needs to be done in order to prepare the way for the Lord (cf. Lk 3,10-18).

John called those who came to be baptized by him: "You snakes!" Harsh words. "Who told you that you could escape from the punishment God is about to send? Do those things that will show that you have turned from your sins. And don't start saying among yourselves that Abraham is your ancestor. I tell you that God can take these stones and make descendants for Abraham! The axe is ready to cut down the trees at the roots; every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown in the fire." (Lk 3,7-9). He vehemently accused those who came to him before inviting them to conversion. Conversion is a serious affair and it is urgent. We must change immediately. There is no sense in dillydallying. What does "to be converted" mean? The people asked John three times: "What must we do?" This was what he said.

His first response was very generic and is addressed to all those who had come to be baptised. John only said: "Whoever has two shirts must give one to the man



who has none and who ever has food must share it." It is a very simple but a very real invitation to share our assets. The tunic, in fact, was the basic dress over which one wore the cloak. Carrying a spare tunic must have been a sign of wealth, but it was obvious that the poor were really badly off, they barely had anything to put on! It was obvious that John was talking to ordinary people, people who may have had a change of clothes and a little extra food. To them he said:



"Share some of what you have!"

After this the Baptist approached the publicans. They were the ones who collected indirect taxes: taxes on goods in transit, on goods sold, inheritance, etc. They had no fixed salary. They carved out a bit extra from every tax, but they also had the bad habit of inflating those amounts so as to set aside something for themselves. It was precisely because of this that they were hated. They lived at the expense of others. To them John says: "Collect what is prescribed," in other words (to put it very simply) just be honest!

Finally he reached a group of soldiers who had the authority to assert the law by force. John told them to refrain from doing that. "Don't take money from anyone by force or accuse anyone falsely. Be content with your pay." (v. 14) It was an invitation not to abuse their power – which was and is still so common.

In summary, what is John the Baptist's answer to the question: "What must we do?" To soldiers: he tells them not to be violent, to the tax collectors: he tells them to be honest and to everyone: he tells them to be generous. He does not tell anyone to do anything special, no strange penances, and even to those whose work seemed despicable (the tax-collectors) he didn't tell them to change their jobs, but just to work honestly. Conversion, according to John the Baptist consisted simply in living a style of life that was honest and generous; not something glamorous but a change that was to be real and enduring.

These admonitions seem so deceptively simple and down to

earth but John the Baptist was no paragon of culture and refinement. He was God's prophet who believed that the Lord's coming was immanent and because of this he urged everyone to be converted immediately in preparation for the Messiah – who John admitted, was greater than he was.

He was coming soon "his winnowing shovel with him, to thresh out all the grain and gather the chaff in a fire that never goes out." This is very powerful imagery of a farmer separating what is good from what is useless and only fit to be burnt. That was how John imagined Jesus as the one who was coming to bring God's judgment: with an unquenchable fire to burn everything that wasn't good.

As you get to know Jesus better through reading the Gospel of Luke you notice that John had not quite hit the target. Jesus' gestures would never be as violent as John had imagined, not even towards his worst enemies. However, we should not misjudge John's use of strong language to describe how God would visit his people; yet we cannot ignore the fact that God *will* visit his people. So, looking at this event, the fact of the matter still remains...that we must change our lives.

Therefore, as we usher in a New Year we could always resolve to adopt a "lifestyle" that concurs with the Gospel in the way we deal with people, conduct business, use things and spend money... In general there are always some corrections we can make to our life thus far. It's not the big things that count but how we live our every day lives. That is what John the Baptist is insisting on...that the small things are not trivial. □

# walking with the Church



## *New Year Resolution, Jesus and the Church*

*from St. Martin's Messenger, Ireland*

**Q.** *I will be making a new resolution at the start of this New Year. Every year I do so, but every year I fail to keep my resolution. Is there any point in even making a resolution in the first place?*

**A.** Thank you for your letter. Habits are never easy to uproot. We have only to look at how easily people get the habit of smoking, drinking too much alcohol, excessive eating, etc. Even though we break resolutions sincerely made and feel bad about it, would we not be much worse off if we had never made a resolution at all? Never been aware of the need of trying to improve our lives and making some effort to do so? Jesus calls us to conversion, to change and praises our resolutions to change. He asks us for persevering effort even though we fail time and time again. Ask him for his help in your efforts to improve. A very good resolution for the coming year would be to decide to give a little more time to prayer.

A Word of Hope - Mother Teresa of Calcutta once said "God does not ask us to succeed, he simply asks us to try."

**Q.** *Wasn't Jesus a Jew? Where did the Catholic Church come from?*

**A.** Thank you for your question. As you say Jesus was a Jew and for centuries the Jewish people had awaited the Messiah who

would fulfil God's promise to establish a kingdom. He would help the poor and the weak and defeat all their enemies. For the Jewish people the promised kingdom was to be a political kingdom ruled over by the Messiah. But Jesus, the son of God, the Messiah, made it clear when he came that he was not about to establish that kind of kingdom. For Jesus the kingdom of God was the reign or rule of God over people's minds and hearts. He had been sent by God the Father to set people free from anything that would prevent God from ruling over their lives. To ensure that his teaching would reach the ends of the earth and continue to be preached after he had gone he gathered a group of apostles around him, and sent them out to preach all that he had taught them. They laid the foundations on which his church, his kingdom, was built. Christ himself, as St. Paul says, was the foundation stone of the Church. It is a church no longer exclusive to one race. All people are invited to be part of his church. As St. Paul teaches "Jesus Christ...abolished the Jewish Law, with its commandments and rules, in order to create out of the two races one new people in union with himself, in this way making peace. By means of the cross he united both races into one body and brought them back to God." Eph. 2:14. This one body was his Church. □

# Witnesses in & for Our Times



## CREATED FOR GRACE ST. BASIL THE GREAT (329 - 379) 2<sup>nd</sup> January

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

**T**he first saint we propose for the year 2011 is a great man. He is considered one of the pillars of the Eastern Church but he is also venerated in the West with much respect and his influence is still prevalent today. In fact, the Monks of the Eastern rite of Greco-Slavic origin still live by the rules that he wrote some 1700 years ago. We speak here of St. Basil the Great. In St. Basil we have before us a star of great luminosity in the firmament of the Church, both as scholar and a model of Christian life.

I found the biography of Basil extremely interesting and factual. Contemporary man, modern or postmodern who still has the courage to ask this most relevant and penetrating of all questions - "What is man?" and "What am I doing here on earth?" will find St. Basil replying: **"Man is a creature who has been commanded by God to exist for grace."** Pretty impressive. Look at all the philosophers, thinkers and writers and you will find nothing more challenging than this response. Those responses will sound "weak, pes-

simistic or nihilistic." Basil links human destiny to its highest possible limits: to God himself. The reason is simple: because in the Incarnation God, in Christ, wanted to bind himself to man's fate. There is nothing greater, more substantial or stable than God himself. This God, even Basil affirms, must always be present before the eyes of man. Thus a righteous man constantly thinks of God and continues to praise him says St. Basil: **"The thought of God once stamped like a seal in that most sublime part of the soul urges it to praise God who constantly lives there... The just man does everything for the glory of God so that every thought, word or deed is counted as praise."** These two statements of the saint give you an idea of his vision of man (anthropology) that is firmly rooted to his positive thoughts of God (theology).

### **Diligent Student and Traveller**

Basil was born at Caesarea of Cappadocia (modern-day Turkey) in 329. He came from a fairly wealthy family which was rich in

culture and spirituality too. Already from an early age Basil was given to reflection, studying the values of Christianity that were lived at the cost of much sacrifice. His paternal grandparents received the crown of martyrdom during the persecution of Maximus after living for seven long years, hiding in the forests and the mountains around Cappadocia. Basil was greatly influenced by his grandmother Macrina and her sister. She was the superior of a community of women living a kind of monastic life. She eventually became a saint. His own sister had greatly influenced him and she urged him

to be baptized and to put an end to his vain love for the human sciences and devote himself completely to God. Basil had the opportunity to study first at Caesarea, Constantinople and then finally at Athens, one of the major cultural centres at the time. There he met Gregory Nazianzen and the two became great friends, eventually bishops, saints and doctors of the Church. It was at Athens that he also met Julian (history will call him Julian the Apostate). He was fascinated by the many monasteries, monks, and hermits that he encountered and he travelled extensively throughout Palestine, Egypt and Armenia. He was impressed by their way of life and was attracted to them eventually he became a monk. As someone who was intelligent and perceptive he



*Armed with only his faith, Basil dared to challenge the ideas of his time and the threats of the emperor Valens. The force of his teachings earned him the title of Doctor of the Church*

noticed that something was missing in the life of the monks. The monks loved God and made many sacrifices even their ascetical life was exemplary, but what about their love of neighbour? How could they practice love of neighbour if they lived in isolation? **Basil sensed that it was not enough to love God and live contemplative lives. They should also immerse themselves in educating the poor and undertaking works of charity and maybe even pursuing their love of neighbour within their community itself.** It was from this experience that the project of the cenobites was formed. He incorporated these ideas on the religious life in to a rule which would enormously influence the Church making St. Basil the father of Eastern monasticism. Not only this: St.

Benedict called him "blessed father St. Basil" who had an influence even on the West.

He was ordained a priest in 364 and for a short time he helped Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, until his death, after which he became pastor of his flock. He was not really old and venerable (he was only 40) but he was experienced, cultured, courageous and above all, holy. All these qualities revealed themselves immediately. First of all he resisted the Arian emperor Valens who supported the Arian heresy (that disrupted Christianity). His wit and intelligence got the better of the governor Modestus who was disappointed and he later invited him to broker peace between some churches and for which Modestus gifted him with much property.

### **The City of Basil for the Sick**

The gifts of those estates he used to build a centre of suffering and hope. The people called it "Basiliade" or "the city of Basil". Basil was enterprising, intelligent and enthusiastic. The concept of the hospital is not modern, it existed already at the time of Basil. The Basiliade was a huge complex with several departments, according to various diseases, to prevent infection. Particular attention was given to leprosy patients, usually abandoned even by relatives. Basil was a great organizer (someone called him "the last of the Romans"). He said that all the patients were also called to **"become God-like by the grace of God"...** He ran a well organized charity to fund his city hospital without waiting for the assistance of the Roman Empire's Ministry of Health. Back at Rome Julian

had become emperor. When he heard about Basiliade he was furious with his government who in spite of all the public money and "human resources" (read slaves) he was not able to achieve something similar to what the penniless monk had achieved with the help of Divine Providence. Julian had forgotten something, or rather someone in whom he no longer believed: God.

St. Basil was not just a great bishop and a saint, but he was also a doctor of the Church. He wrote many works. While Gregory of Nyssa, his brother was a thinker, he was a practical man, given to facts, concise, clear, profound and rigorously argumentative. He has left us theological and exegetical works (his moral and ascetical commentaries of Sacred Scripture) and a large collection of his letters. In them we notice Basil as a spiritual teacher, and father and that was not only to his monks but to all believers. **A concept to which the great Basil always returned was the supreme goodness of God and the uniqueness of man, the happiness of those who live in the presence of God. But to achieve this it is necessary to "walk in God's presence" and to constantly practice asceticism or the spiritual effort to conform oneself to the person of Christ and not to hinder the work and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.** Even today, St. Basil offers us the image of a God who constantly cares for man in his greatness and uniqueness. The objective of this God is to *cooperate* with the man in achieving greatness and happiness so that every man is called to "become the grace of God" and that is the challenge that St. Basil throws down to men of all time. □



# IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

## Assets and Possibilities

A personnel officer in a large firm was interviewing an attractive miss. She answered all the usual questions: name, address, work experience. "Have you any physical handicaps?" she was asked.

Her eyes widened and her looks rounded in surprise. "Oh no, sir," she responded, "they have always been assets!"

## House Rules

The neighbourhood dogs were romping together one day when Scottie came along. "Heavens, Scottie, what's wrong with you?"

"I feel awful. I'm nervous, can't sleep, have no appetite."

"You ought to see a good vet."

"Oh, I've seen them all, and they all say the same thing: 'Nothing wrong organically.'"

"Perhaps you should see a good psychiatrist."

"Oh, I couldn't - you see, I'm not allowed on couches."

## Unadulterated Diagnosis

The doctor diagnosed the Anglo-Indian colonel's illness as hydropsy. What was that? Too much water in the body, the doctor explained. The whisky drinking colonel was indignant. "But I've never drunk a drop of water in all my life, doctor!" he paused. Then sadly, he concluded: "Must have been the ice."

## Point of View

Wife to husband, after several rounds of drinks at a cocktail

party: "Henry, don't take another cocktail. Your face is already getting blurred."

## A Matter of Time

"For the last time," a husband shouted towards the bedroom, "are you ready to go?"

"For heaven's sake, be quiet," retorted his wife. "I've been telling you for the last hour that I'll be there in a minute."

## An Office Break

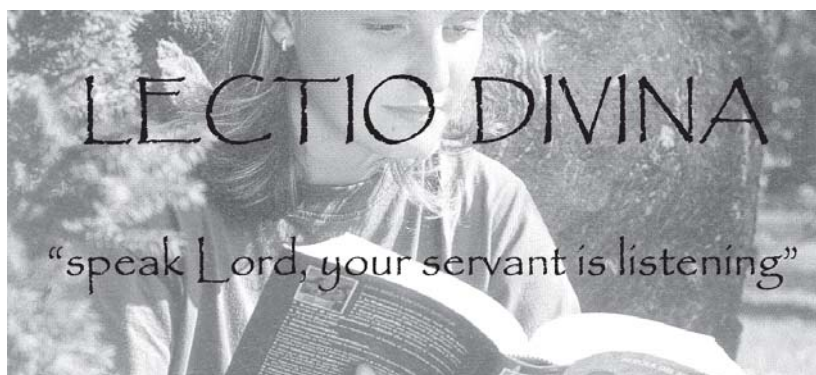
A government clerk sat at the table after breakfast one morning engrossed in his newspaper for over an hour. Finally he asked for another cup of coffee. "Coffee!" echoed his wife. "But look at the time. Aren't you going to the office today?"

"Office?" exclaimed the startled man. "Heavens! I thought I *was* at the office."

## Dear Milkman

The night before my husband and I were to leave on holiday I discovered I'd cleaned the refrigerator so thoroughly that there were no eggs for breakfast the next morning. So I wrote a note to the milkman, asking him to leave us two eggs. To be sure there would be no mistake I added: "Not two dozen, just *two*."

Next morning when I opened the back door I saw my note had left no doubt in the milkman's mind. There, waiting for me were two eggs. In bold black letters one read: HIS, the other, HERS. □



## **FOR YOUR NAME'S SAKE, O GOD, HEAR ME (Ps. 53)**

*by Roberta Fora*

**T**his psalm, though short, may be divided into two parts. At the beginning, in the first part one finds a prayer of supplication by a man in his distress as he turns to God in faith and asks to be heard.

Here is what it says:

*Save me by your power, O God;  
Set me free by your might!  
Hear my prayer, O God;  
Listen to my words!*

In the second part, the Psalmist expresses his confidence that God will answer him and so he begs God to destroy his enemies:

*Proud men are coming to attack me;  
Cruel men are trying to kill me  
men who do not care about God.  
But God is my helper.  
The Lord is my defender.  
May God use their own evil  
to punish my enemies.  
He will destroy them  
because he is faithful.*

It is difficult to pray this psalm with conviction. We are a little confused when we recall Christ's words: "...Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who ill-treat you." (Lk. 6: 27-28)



This psalm can however help us to reflect on our lives. It can help us to rediscover a particular aspect of our lives that we are struggling with. Our lives are a constant battle between good and evil and we need to do all in our power to fight it knowing full well that God is on our side and our victory is assured.

So, what weapons do we employ to fight these enemies? Certainly prayer, constant and continuous prayer so that every action is offered to the Lord and derives its meaning from Him.

The other aid is the Sacrament of Reconciliation – Confession, at which we humbly acknowledge our sins and are renewed by God's grace. This enables us to start our Faith journey once more.

Finally at the Eucharist we give God thanks. At Holy Communion we receive the bread of life, we receive Jesus. He is our strength and our support. He is that faithful friend who never abandons us – and fights with us against the evil that torments us.

### **The Awareness of the Certainty**

The certainty of the Lord's victory over evil should not make us proud. That assurance is not given to us to feed our pride. On the contrary, it should be a strong impetus to remain strong and determined Christians.

*Lord,  
we ask you to increase  
our faith in you,  
our Saviour and Redeemer.  
Help us,  
never, for any reason  
to give up daily prayer  
and the reception of the Sacraments,  
those wonderful tools  
that give us your grace.  
The regular participation in*



*the Eucharist and the celebration  
of the sacrament of Confession  
encourages us  
to eagerly combat evil in our lives  
so that we can become  
credible witnesses  
of your infinite love.  
Finally, Father,  
we thank you  
because you are faithful,  
ever by our side  
even when everything around us  
is negative and evil.  
Life is your greatest gift  
and should never be squandered.  
To know you are with us  
gives us boundless joy  
and everything around us  
takes on a new meaning  
and we are filled  
with hope and confidence,  
and may we never forget this. ▣*

DEDICATED TO  
THE HOLY FAMILY

Quiet

## THE HOLY FAMILY VALUES THAT BUILD

by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI

*On Sunday, 28 December 2008, the feast of the Holy Family, prior to leading the recitation of the Angelus with the faithful in St. Peter's Square, Pope Benedict XVI commented on the Holy Family of Nazareth and addressed a warm greeting to the families meeting in Madrid to pray and commit themselves to working on behalf of the family. The following is a translation of the Pope's reflection, which was given in Italian and Spanish.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On this Sunday following the Nativity of the Lord we are joyfully celebrating the Holy Family of Nazareth. It is a most suitable context because Christmas is the Feast of the family par excellence. This is demonstrated by numerous traditions and social customs, especially the practice of gathering together as a family for festive meals and for greetings and the exchange of gifts; and how can the hardship and suffering caused by certain family wounds which on these occasions are amplified, go unnoticed?

Jesus wished to be born and to grow up in a human family; he had the Virgin Mary as his mother and Joseph who acted as his father; they raised and educated him with immense love. Jesus' family truly deserves the title "Holy", for it was fully engaged in the desire to do the will of God, incarnate in the adorable presence of Jesus. On the one hand, it was a family like all others and as such, it is a model of conjugal love, collaboration, sacrifice and entrustment to divine Providence, hard work and solidarity – in short, of all those values that the family safeguards and promotes, making an important contribution to forming the fabric of every society.

At the same time, however, the Family of Nazareth was unique, different from all other families because of its singular vocation linked to the mission of the Son of God. With precisely this uniqueness it points out to every family – and in the first place to Christian families – God's horizon, the sweet and demanding primacy of his will, the prospect of Heaven to which we are all destined. For all this, today we thank God, but also the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, who with much faith and willingness cooperated in the Lord's plan of salvation.

(...) The family is certainly a grace of God through which tran-

# Spaces

## LY EXEMPLIFIES A HEALTHY SOCIETY

*Pope Benedict XVI*

spires what God himself is: Love – an entirely free love that sustains boundless fidelity, even in times of difficulty or dejection.

These qualities are reflected eminently in the Holy Family in which Jesus came into the world, was raised and was filled with wisdom, with Mary's thoughtful care and St. Joseph's faithful custody.

Dear families do not let the love, openness to life and incomparable ties that unite your home weaken. Ask God for this constantly, pray together so that your resolutions may be enlightened by faith and strengthened by divine grace on the path of holiness. Thus, with the joy of sharing all things in love, you will give the world a beautiful witness to how important the family is for the human person and for society.

The Pope is beside you, imploring the Lord especially for those in every family who are most in need of health, work, comfort and company. In this Angelus prayer, I entrust you all to our Mother in Heaven, the Most Blessed Virgin Mary.

Dear brothers and sisters let us pray from this moment especially for those families most sorely tried by life's difficulties and by the scourges of misunderstanding and division. May the Redeemer, born in Bethlehem, give to all of them serenity and the strength to walk united on the path of good.

Let us entrust our fervent prayers for all these intentions to Jesus, the Prince of Peace, and let us say to him, to Mary and to Joseph: "O family of Nazareth, expert in suffering, give peace to the world". Give it today especially to the Holy Land! □





# A DELIGHTFUL AFTERNOON

by Dianne Bourgeois

*No one appreciates the very special genius  
of your conversation as the dog does.*

~Christopher Morley

**H**ey lazy bones, it must be nice to sleep on the job."

As the owner of a small book and gift shop, I was addressing the most popular member of my staff. She lifted her head slightly to peer at me with her large brown eyes. Sensing that I wasn't initiating a snack break, she lay her head back down on the oval bed secluded under my desk. Rather than going back to sleep, my one-year-old Pug gazed at me contentedly.

"I love you too, Guinevere."

Having a canine employee has many benefits. How many bosses can say they have a staff member who loves them unconditionally? There is never a complaint about being paid in biscuits rather than cash. Break time is a refreshing gossip-free walk together around the block. There are never reprimands for a poor attitude, as my four-footed employee views every day on the job as an exciting new adventure. And as any business owner knows, the hours can be long and lonely when doing the less glamorous behind-the-scenes work. The companionship of a devoted furry staff member is priceless.

Guinevere loved going to work with me and if she thought she was going to be left at home, she

would try to climb into my soft leather briefcase. She took her job to heart and quickly acquired a fan base among my customers. She greeted every one who entered the shop with a wag of her tightly curled tail and listened intently as they spoke to her.

Dogs tend to be non-judgmental toward humans, but Pugs in particular love everybody. Guinevere accepted everyone for just being themselves and she had the gift of making everyone feel special when she focused her attention on them. Guinevere's presence brought out the best in many of my customers. Even the shyest customers became more loquacious when talking to or about my little canine ambassador.

One afternoon a woman came into my shop with her teenage daughter who was mentally challenged. The daughter was delighted by the sight of my Guinevere peering at her through the glass jewelry case.

"I have a Dalmatian," the girl said excitedly.

"My dog's a Pug," I shared.

Guinevere sauntered over to the baby gate that kept her contained within the employee area, which was formed by the jewelry case, my desk, and the checkout

counter. I kept a chair by the gate so that Guinevere's admirers could sit and be with her and she never denied anyone an audience.

Sometimes a weary customer just needed to sit for a short rest, only to find themselves reenergized by interacting with my furry staff member. Petting my Pug's luxuriously soft fawn-colored coat or stroking her black velvet-like ears was an instant stress reducer.

After letting the mother know I was available if she had any questions or needed help, I addressed her daughter.

"Would you like to see my dog?

formation about something called a Dalmatian. Ellen's enthusiasm eclipsed all appearance, both mentally and physically, of being a mentally challenged person.

It was a slow afternoon and no other customers had come in so I hadn't realized how long Ellen and I had been talking and laughing until her mother came over to the checkout counter.

The mother's eyes teared up as she said, "Thank you for taking the time to talk to my daughter. She's extremely shy and rarely talks to anyone but family and close friends."

*But like any stranger or someone I knew only by sight that I passed by during the course of a day, I didn't know their hopes and dreams, their hobbies and passions, their abilities and talents.*

Her name is Guinevere."

As I pointed to the chair, the girl happily accepted my invitation to sit with my Pug. Guinevere, always the hostess extraordinaire, stood on her hind legs with her front paws resting on the girl's lap, her tail wagging furiously, and her tongue at the ready to dispense Pug kisses.

"My name's Dianne. What's yours?"

"Ellen," the girl replied.

Ellen's mother gave me a smile and continued shopping as her daughter and I swapped dog stories and compared the similarities and differences between the Dalmatian and Pug breeds. Guinevere listened to Ellen with rapt attention, occasionally cocking her head to one side or the other as if to absorb this new in-

"It was my pleasure," I responded. "We both enjoyed talking about our dogs."

As I said these words, I thought of the other mentally challenged folks in my town. I always smiled and said, "Hi," and perhaps added a little small talk. But like any stranger or someone I knew only by sight that I passed by during the course of a day, I didn't know their hopes and dreams, their hobbies and passions, their abilities and talents. My furry little ambassador had bridged the conversation gap, allowing a woman with a Pug and a teenage girl with a Dalmatian to discover their mutual love of dogs.

This simple connection gave us the gift of spending a delightful afternoon enjoying each other's company. □

*(Continued from pg. 6)*

At times, we will need to 'fill in' the details of our course of action using our own intelligence, experience and skills.

Were we to adopt such an approach, how different would not our lives be! Adversity would be seen more as an opportunity to overcome obstacles than as a setback or calamity. Lack of cooperation from others would only mean that we need to search for and discover more resources within ourselves or elsewhere. Our relationship and closeness to God's Spirit would be a living one, constantly being strengthened with each wave of difficulties. Would we not also be like the apostles, who "rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer dishonour for the sake of the name"? (Acts 5:41). Our Christian lives, rather than being filled with petitionary prayer mostly centred round our own material and worldly needs, would be much more praise-filled and joyous and oriented towards others in need.

## **Conclusion**

These are some of the valuable lessons we could learn from this young lad who had a dream and was confident that one day he would see it converted into reality. If each of us had a dream that entailed making at least a small portion of our world into a better place for all, what a difference would we not see in ourselves and in others! Wouldn't we have a lot more to smile about each day of our lives? And wouldn't the Risen Lord be very much a part of our lives and meet us even in the most trying circumstances in which we live?



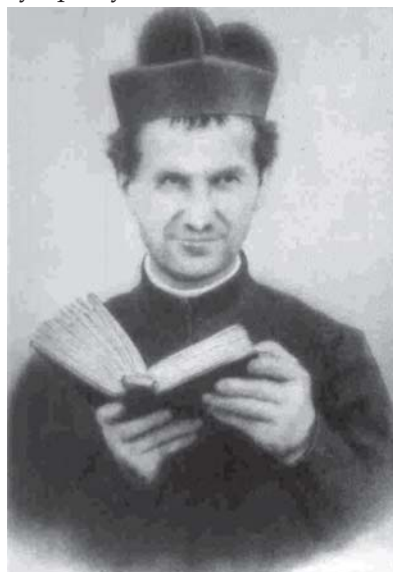
And further, wouldn't some of these realized dreams of ours really be 'miracles' not so much in the sense of being situations that go against the laws of Nature, but rather as 'signs' that the Risen Lord is very much part of our human existence, that the Kingdom of God has indeed come amongst us and that it moves inexorably towards its final fulfillment at the End times. But will that be a reality for us, or would it remain mere wishful thinking? The answer my friend, is blowing in the wind – it will depend on how much we consciously choose to take the resurrection of Jesus seriously and make it a vital part of our earthly existence. Having chosen to live in this way, the Lord would then have a very challenging mission for us, saying to us, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me" (Mt 28:10). What would your choice be: to live life with a perpetual moan and groan, or rather like the young man in our story, with a smile that proclaims the victory of the Risen Christ? ▣

# DON BOSCO'S SENSE OF HUMOUR

Natale Cerrato

**D**on Bosco was a person with "a kind yet very strong temperament. He was markedly good, tender and sensitive, possessing an open mind; a true genius with a practical sense and typical Piedmontese humour that is found in the saints" (A. Caviglia).

"Indeed, cheerfulness was the very essence of his character," comments Fr. Lemoyne, his biographer, "even in the midst of the thorniest problems and the greatest afflictions." (EBM 1, 82) In fact, his conversations were dotted with jokes that easily gained the sympathy and affection of the au-



*One of the earliest photographs of Don Bosco*



CHARACTERISTICS

DON BOSCO'S

dience.

Those who know something about the life of Don Bosco would be aware of the curiously characteristic simplicity of the wit of Don Bosco which flavoured all that he did and said.

This year we will try to present various characteristics of Don Bosco as seen from his interactions with all kinds of people, from his own boys at the Oratory to civilians and statesmen. It will give you an idea of his human qualities and his great heart that always burned with zeal for the salvation of souls and which was in constant union with God.

There are some who, perhaps are still not convinced that simple things can be significantly important to bring out the greatness of a saint like Don Bosco. However, his own followers can testify to the fact that the Supernatural seemed so natural to Don Bosco that one



could hardly recognize it. It seemed to be disguised by his simplicity, good nature. Even the casualness of his conversations concealed it.

"Cheerfulness, work and piety," "health, study and holiness," were the slogans he used to motivate his boys. "Bread, work and Paradise," "Hi! Save Yourself!" these were slogans he used to motivate his followers: "Reason, Religion and Kindness," were the foundation of his educational system. These few phrases were very simple but they had a profound meaning.

However, when he began, this kind of language was not going to be simple.

### The First Signs

Don Bosco was not timid and "he was not meek by nature. He acquired this through, who knows, how much effort." (E. Ceria). A curious failure of his inner

struggle in the practice of patience is described by him in the *Memoirs* he left to his spiritual children.

From the time he was a boy he dreamed of dedicating his life to the service of youth and this motivated him to study. 'Perhaps, one day I might become a priest!' But his brother Anthony did not like the idea. One day when he returned home from work he saw John at the table reading and studying. John not only did his fair share in the fields but he also took a few moments of quiet reading and studying at the kitchen table. This is what happened one day as he himself narrates it:

'Despite all my work and good will, Anthony still was not happy. One day he announced very decisively, first to my mother and then to my brother Joseph, that he could stand it no more. "I've had it up to here," he blustered. "I've had my fill of this grammar business. Look at me," he said, "I've grown big and strong without ever setting eyes on such books."' "

"That's nonsense!" Carried away by blind rage, I retorted in a way I should not have: "Our donkey is bigger and stronger than you are, and he never went to school either. Do you want to be like him?" This so angered him that only speed saved me from a volley of blows and smacks." (From the *Memoirs of the Oratory* by Don Bosco pp. 41-42)

Fr. Eugene Ceria notes that it was a "precious confession."

At the school of his mother, Mamma Margaret John Bosco learned love of God and neighbour, courage and hard



work...and many other beautiful things not least of which was a typical sense of humour that was both intelligent and witty.

The "woman with a majestic

*"In the saints  
we are looking for  
what unites them to  
us rather than what  
sets them apart  
from us.  
We want them  
to come down  
to the level of us  
ordinary people..."*

*Pope Paul VI*

bearing" who appeared to him in the dream at the age of nine said: "Make yourself humble, strong and robust!" He was characteristically an extrovert but he needed to be humble. He soon learned its value, but then, a sense of serene humour would draw anyone to him.

we have said above nor are they aimed at being simply "pleasant reading." They are intended to highlight Don Bosco's typical way of interacting.

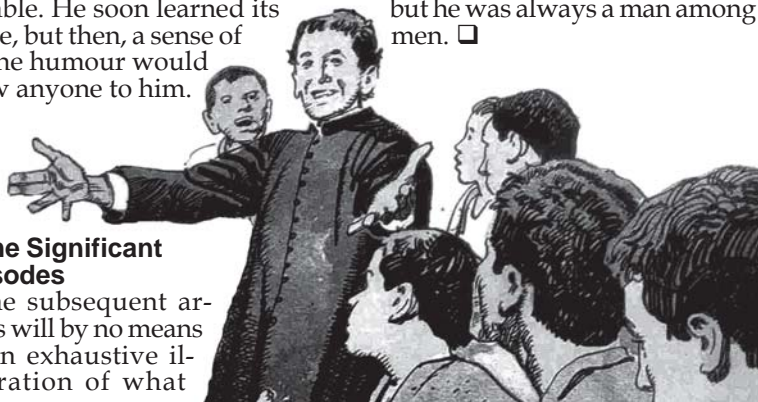
There are some who hold, not without a sense of humour, that a combination of mysticism and common sense do not go together in a person, yet Don Bosco remained a contemplative even in the very mundane tasks of daily life. On the other hand there are some modern historians who would rather highlight human traits in the saints rather than their ascetical or mystical traits. One day Pope Paul VI himself said so:

"In the saints we are looking for what unites them to us rather than what sets them apart from us. We want them to come down to the level of us ordinary people, immersed in everyday experiences that are not always edifying; we want to see them as brothers who have experienced our misery and can understand our intimate feelings and the heavy burdens of our earthly condition" (3 Nov. 1963).

Don Bosco was undeniably a saint recognized by the Church but he was always a man among men. □

### **Some Significant Episodes**

The subsequent articles will by no means be an exhaustive illustration of what



### GOA

The Catholic Church in Goa says “bad governance” has led to environmental degradation in the western Indian state.

A statement jointly issued by the diocesan Council for Social Justice and Peace and Caritas Goa on October 3<sup>rd</sup> 2010 made a specific reference to the mining industry, garbage problems and land management in the state.

The statement, issued on Social Apostolate Day, appealed for a unified effort to promote biodiversity as a common responsibility.

It added that the government remains silent on the illegal iron ore mining industry, which it said, was destroying Goa. Politicians say the industry provides people jobs.

Such an attitude betrays the lack of concern among those in power toward “the irreparable destruction” mining causes to Goa’s hilly regions, its air, water and soil.

The press note also said the illegal mining led to the loss of traditional occupations such as farming.

It also regretted that mounds of garbage and release of sewage in bodies of water have sullied Goa, a “picturesque state”.

The statement said people have neglected their duties to make their elected representatives accountable. They have abandoned cultivation and opted to consuming low quality imported rice.

However it commended young people who have cultivated their ancestral lands. *UCAN*

### NAGERCOIL

A Catholic priest based in

Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu, has petitioned officials to initiate action to free 32 fishermen imprisoned and reportedly undergoing torture in a Qatar prison.

The fishermen have been lodged in a prison for the past two months after they strayed into Qatar waters, news agency PTI reported quoting official sources. Qatar coastguard arrested them, it said.

The fishermen from costal villages of Tamil Nadu, working in Saudi Arabia, were arrested on July 10, 2010. They were in six boats and strayed into Qatar waters.

Father Churchill, on behalf of the South Asian Fishermen Fraternity, petitioned the District Collector Rajendra Retnoo seeking steps for their release, official sources said.

The memorandum he submitted alleged that the owner of the boats had not taken any steps for their release and that they were being tortured at the Jeneya-II prison where they had been lodged.

The collector promised that the government would take necessary steps, sources said. *PTI/ibnlive.com*

### CHINA

With the approval of both the Holy See and Chinese government authorities, Bishop Peter Wu Junwei was consecrated as bishop of Yuncheng on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2010. The east-central Chinese city has a population of 4.9 million; the diocese has 15,000 lay Christians, 30 priests and 40 nuns.

The new bishop is a descendant of St. Peter Wang Anbang, a secular Franciscan martyr who was canonised in 2001.

"The diocesan community has greatly rejoiced to learn that Bishop



*Newly ordained Bishop Peter Wu Junwei of Xinjiang*

Wu thanked the Holy Father for his appointment, professing a sincere loyalty to the Pope and the universal Church," according to Fides News Agency.

### AUSTRALIA

Bishop Brian Heenan of Rockhampton, in the state of Queensland, has gone to India to find priests to work in a part of Australia that stretches from tropical islands to the wilderness of the Australian outback. The diocese covers some 160,000 square miles - slightly smaller than all of Sweden - but has only 400,000 people.

He hopes that Indian priests could help overcome an extreme shortage of native clergy. "These priests can come, please God, for maybe two or three years and then, if all is going well, they will probably go back to India, and others will come and take their place," Heenan said. The bishop said he would be happy to hear from priests elsewhere in the world who were interested in working in his diocese. He noted that other Australian bishops had gone "priest hunting."

"Most of the dioceses have journeyed overseas, as I am doing, to South America, South Africa, the Philippines or to Europe, and including India, simply because...not many young people are offering themselves for the priesthood at this time. *NCR on-line 03/05/2010*

### FRANCE

One of France's leading intellectuals, Bernard-Henri Lévy has come to the defence of the Catholic Church and Pope Benedict.

In an interview with the Spanish newspaper ABC, the Jewish writer said that Catholicism is "the most attacked religion in Europe". He said it was unfortunate that so many injustices were being committed against the Holy Father.

Lévy said: "The Pope's voice is extremely important, and we are very unjust to this Pope. I am not Catholic, but I think there is prejudice and especially major anti-clericalism that is taking on enormous proportions in Europe."

"In France there is much talk about the desecrations of Jewish and Muslim cemeteries, but nobody knows that the tombs of Catholics are continually desecrated. There is a sort of anti-clericalism in France that is not healthy at all." He added: "We have the right to criticize religions" but he said the scale of the criticism was "out of proportion."

Levy has in the past voiced his support for the construction of the mosque at Ground Zero in New York, but has publicly objected to the full face veil or burkha.

Often referred simply as BHL, Lévy was one of the leaders of the 'Nouvelle Philosophie' movement in 1976. □

# Reflecting on Mary

## REFLECTIONS ON THE “HAIL MARY”

*(exegetical & inspirational) Part III*

*by Fr. R. Loehrlein, SM*

*“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.”*

**T**here were two women in the Old Testament who were called “blessed among women,” and one in the New. And there is something common among all three. The first is found in the Book of Judges, chapter 5, where you can read the Song of Deborah. In verse 24, we read: “Blessed among women be Jael, blessed among tent-dwelling women.”

There were wars between the Canaanites and the Israelites. The Canaanites were a corrupt people. They worshiped Baal and Asherah. They practiced incest, adultery and child sacrifice as acts of worship. And the Israelites had often turned from their LORD to follow these evil practices. So, God gave them up into slavery to the Canaanites. But when the people turned to the LORD and cried out for help, God would have mercy. Such was the case when Deborah was the prophet-



ess and Barak was a warrior with no courage. When Deborah told him that God would give the army of Sisera into his hands, Barak said he would not go without Deborah with him. She then told him that

the LORD would give Israel the victory, but it would be by the hand of a woman. While Barak prepared his troops on the mountain, Sisera brought his iron chariots before him in the valley. But there was a rain, and the chariots were mired in the mud. Sisera fled on foot as far as the tent of Jael. Jael stepped out to greet Sisera and invited him to hide in her tent. She covered him with a rug. He asked for water, she gave him milk, and he fell fast asleep. Then, Jael took a tent peg and a mallet and nailed his head to the ground. And so, the people sang, "Blessed among women be Jael, blessed among tent-dwelling women."

The second is found in Judith 13:18 where you can read what

Uziah, an elder of Bethulia, said to Judith after she had killed Holofernes, the Assyrian enemy: "Blessed are you, daughter, by the Most High God, above all the women on earth, and blessed be the Lord God, the creator of heaven and earth." Without giving herself in sin, she had cut off the head of Holofernes and brought it back in her handmaid's bag. What is common between these two women is that they destroyed the deadly enemy of their people by striking at their heads.

And Mary? Have you seen the image of the Immaculate Conception, where she stands with her foot on the head of the deadly serpent? There is an ancient Messianic prophecy in the first book of

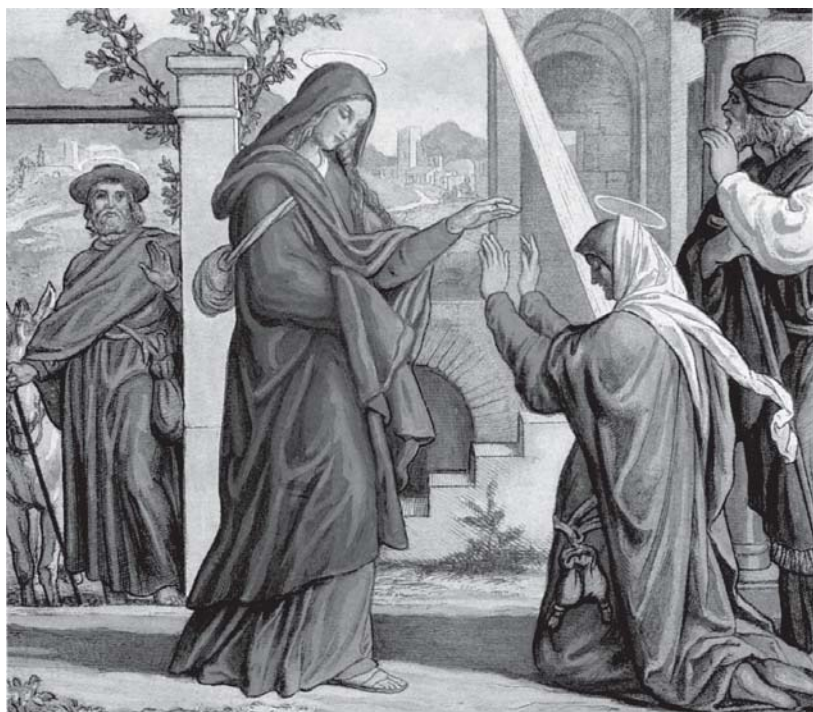




the Bible, Genesis 3:15 where the LORD God said to the serpent: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel." *The woman and her offspring.* The early Church could easily understand: Mary and Jesus. However, there is an older version of the English translation, made from the Latin Vulgate, which reads, "she shall strike at your head, while you strike at her heel." And the images of the Immaculate Conception always show Mary standing with her child in her arms, and the heel of one foot is crushing the head of the snake, Satan. The translation is wrong, and it can give rise to a misunderstanding about Mary and how she crushed the head of Satan.

The mistake was about who would strike at the head of the serpent, and at whose heel the serpent would strike.

If it were the woman who would strike at the head of the serpent, then the image of the Immaculate Conception would seem to say, "The woman has conquered. She has had her child and has destroyed the serpent." But if it is the offspring who strikes at the head of the serpent, then the image says: "The woman has conquered in her son, while the son has conquered in his mother." The truth is that the Immaculate Conception was a creation of Jesus. It was he who crushed the head of Satan. On the cross Jesus created Grace, all Grace for all humankind. Her son in his



salvation work on Calvary created all the Graces that his mother enjoyed. And one of the most marvelous creations of this Grace was the Immaculate Conception of his own Mother. That makes her *Kecharitomene*.

***“Satan failed  
to have  
any influence  
in the heart of  
Mary. It was not  
Mary who struck  
at the head  
of Satan, but  
it was Jesus  
who crushed  
the head  
of Satan.”***

The correct translation of the passage in Genesis 3:15 should read, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel.” Satan attacked the heel of Jesus, his humanity. The heel was considered to be the weak part of the body. If a warrior had the Achilles tendon of his heel cut, he was put out of action. The Fathers of the Church often commented that “God could not die, but when the Son of God became the son of

Mary, then God took on the weakness which would allow God to suffer death.” The humanity of Jesus could be considered to be that heel which Satan would attack. His enemies took Jesus and crucified him and had him buried. But at the same time, the heel of Jesus crushed the head of Satan, because by his death and resurrection in his humanity, Jesus created all Grace. He broke the power of sin and death and of Satan. It was in creating Grace that Jesus struck at the head of Satan.

When Jesus hung upon the cross, he was standing between his Father and the world, and his arms reached out to everyone, of the past, in the present and into the future. His creative action was not limited to time and space. He could and did create Grace, all Grace, including the Grace of his mother’s being conceived without sin, the Immaculate Conception. It was by this Grace of the Immaculate Conception that he absolutely crushed the head of Satan. By this Grace Satan failed to have any influence in the heart of Mary. It was not Mary who struck at the head of Satan, but it was Jesus who crushed the head of Satan through the Immaculate Conception of his mother. The image of the Immaculate Conception is correct, for Mary can proudly hold up her son while her foot crushes Satan. In Jesus she conquers! And in her he conquers! She was indeed the *Kecharitomene*. This gift of Jesus for his mother was the most loving and most beautiful of all his Graces. And that’s why she proclaimed, “For he has looked upon his servant in her lowliness; all ages to come shall call me blessed.” □ (Conclusion)

## LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

Dear Mother Mary, I thank you from the deepest core of my heart for being with me in the most crucial times of my life. I pray that your astounding grace may radiate throughout the universe.

*Jacquiline Jameela Ignatius, Kollam, Kerala*

Thank you dear Mother for all the graces granted to me through the prayer that I prayed.

*Vincent de Silva, Malaysia*

Thanks dearest Mother for all the graces received.

*James D'Souza, Papdy, Vasai*

My breast cancer resurfaced for the third time in 2008 and the doctors said it was in its advanced stage. They had suggested an advanced chemotherapy and it would cost Rs. 9 lakh. During this time my daughter miraculously secured a job but there was hardly any possibility of getting medical insurance for the chemotherapy. But through the good will of a lot of people and friends the medical bills were passed and we received a claim of Rs. 7.57 lakh. The cancer was diagnosed two years back and I'm still alive to recount this amazing grace. I thank Our Lady and Don Bosco and all my saintly protectors.

*P.JT, Mumbai*

Thank you dear Mother Mary for helping me to get a good job.

*Christopher, Mumbai*

Thank you Mother Mary for helping me get a job in a reputed firm in Dubai and for granting all my petitions.

*Pameline Martin, Dubai*

Thank you dearest Mother for all the favours granted to me and my family. Please keep us always in your care.

*Daniel Fernandes, Mumbai*

I am so grateful to Our Lady for helping prevent a very serious accident because my daughter had a panic attack while driving in Dubai. I implore Our Lady to grant her healing from these attacks that have tormented her for several years.

*Helen Furtado, Dubai*

On 22nd August 2010 my husband and I were returning home after Mass and he rode his bike over a ditch and lost his balance. We fell but I had not a scratch and neither was my husband hurt. I owe this to the maternal protection of Our Lady. I am immensely grateful for her protection.

*Mrs. Mary Stella Jantz, Mysore*

I was diagnosed with osteoporosis and told that I should not fall or I would suffer a severe fracture of my hips. Nonetheless one Sunday morning in June 2010 I fell off my bed. I was too scared to move lest I had broken my hip. Fortunately I was saved by the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Our Lady.

*Mrs. P. Samagond, USA*

On July 29, 2010 my husband suddenly had a dizzy spell and fell unconscious. He had to be admitted to hospital. After a week he returned normal and all his reports were clear. We prayed the 3 Hail Marys before he was admitted and we're sure that Our Lady had been there to see us through this crisis.

*Natheline Coelho, 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.*

A sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians for helping me to successfully secure my immigration and for numerous other blessings.

*Francisco do Rosario Noronha, Mumbai*

My sincere thanks to Our Lady for all the graces granted to me through the faithful recitation of the three Hail Marys. *Cajetan Mendes, Canada*  
Thank you dear Mother Mary for all the favours received.

*Sweebert Dantes, Bahrain*

Dear Mother Mary, thank you for helping us to pay our home loan.

*Bhooma*

Thank you dear Mother Mary for all the graces received through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys.

*Antonieta Simoes, Macau, South China*

Due to excessive vomiting and diarrhoea I was admitted to the ICU in an unconscious state and with no pulse rate. The diarrhoea continued for almost 4 to 5 days and finally a CT scan was advised. It was then that I prayed the 3 Hail Marys for a clear report. Since the doctors couldn't diagnose my case on Good Friday I was discharged from the hospital. I always recite the 3 Hail Marys and I know Our Lady listens to our prayers.

*A Devotee*

My sincere thanks to Our Blessed Mother for all the favours received. Please continue to shower on us your blessings and keep us in your care.

*Rosie Wang, Kolkata*

Thank you, dear Mother Mary for blessing me and my family abundantly.

*Flynn Pinto, Dubai, UAE*

Thank you dearest Mother for seeing my daughter safely through her surgery. She was very far away from us and we thank you for sending her many sincere friends who were with her through her surgery. I never fail to pray the 3 Hail Marys.

*Hedwige Fernandez, Mumbai*

I am grateful to Our Lady for my daughter's success in her examination and for the numerous favours received by my family through the daily recitation of the 3 Hail Marys.

*Sandra Furtado, Goa*

Thank you Mother Mary for keeping my bag safe in a very crowded shopping car park. It was certainly due to the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys.

*Yayola Moraes, Goa*

## THEY ARE GRATEFUL TO OUR LADY AND DON BOSCO

Dear Don Bosco, thank you for all the graces received through your intercession. *Rebecca, Ahmedabad*

My sincere thanks to Our Lady and Don Bosco for helping me to pass my 2nd Semester BE examinations with a distinction. Thanks a lot for helping me in my workshop practice which was very tiring and I had lost all hope that I would be able to succeed.

*Cleta D'Souza, Mangalore*

I thank the Most Holy Trinity, Mother Mary and Don Bosco since all the routine medical tests of my mother were normal.

*Ajit Pinto, Bahrain*

My grateful thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary and Don Bosco for the many favours granted to me and my family and for healing our sicknesses and averting surgeries. My son collided with a car and his bike was completely damaged but he was saved unhurt. We always pray the 3 Hail Marys.

*Mercia, Goa*

Thank you dear Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for a new job, for having completed my probationary period successfully.

*Wincy Thomas, Bahrain*

My sincere gratitude to Our Lady and Don Bosco.

*James D'Souza, Thane Dt*

My sincere thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary and Don Bosco for granting us good health and for all the graces we have received through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys and the Holy Rosary. Always keep us in your care.

*Sebastian A. Noronha, Mumbai*

I am very happy that I passed in my class X exam with first division marks and I owe this to Our Lady to whom I prayed the 3 Hail Marys. I am very grateful and thankful to our dear Blessed Virgin mom for her help and assistance in my exams.

*Vishal Tak, Ajmer*

I was suffering with a voice problem for the last fifteen or twenty years. Then in June of 2003 I went to Bombay for a check up. The doctor there told me that I had cancer of my vocal cords and they had to be removed. I cried that night. I came back to Poona. My son took me to Budrani Hospital where the doctor treated me without an operation. In June 2003 I started my radiation. During this period my merciful God gave me the strength to bear the suffering without any side effects. Within two months I returned to normal and my voice returned. I am grateful to Our Almighty Father, Jesus His Son, Our Blessed Mother, Don Bosco and all the saints. I am still doing well.

*Mrs. Shirley Michael, Pune*

My grateful thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary, St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for getting me a good job on the ship.

*Cliff Savio Pereira*

Our sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians, St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for hearing our prayers and curing our son and blessing him with a good job.

*Mathildes Simoes Pereira, Goa*



## THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



For all the graces received and for guiding me in my difficult days. Through my daily prayers to Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio. I have seen the impossible working positively for me.

*Roshni D'Souza, Mumbai*

My infinite gratitude to Jesus, Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for the precious gift of a beautiful, healthy baby girl. I believe it was the miraculous novena to the Infant Jesus, the powerful intercession of the "Three Hail Marys" and the scapular of St. Dominic Savio that I never removed that my prayers were answered and which saw me through my first pregnancy.

*Mrs Tricia Maree D'Souza, Mumbai*

My brother's sister-in-law's grandchild - Baby Netanya - a gift from God to Amneeta and Bruce after 7 years suffered from an attack of meningitis after a month and was hospitalised. She was put on glucose and medication. The entire family had recourse to reciting the 3 Hail Marys continually imploring our Blessed Mother for her intercession. We prayed the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy and to the Infant Jesus. Thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio, for always being there, for protecting this beautiful baby. Our hearts overflow with gratitude to all our heavenly intercessors.

*A Devotee*

My sincere and heartfelt thanks to God, the Holy Family, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio. I recite the 3 Hail Marys daily without fail. When a calamity struck us in 2008 I was very upset that such a thing happened to our family, but it was much later that I realised it was through Mary's intercession that our family was saved. I send my belated thanks to Mother Mary and I ask for her protection and guidance.

*A Devotee, Mumbai*

Thank you dear St. Dominic Savio for the safe delivery and the birth of a healthy baby boy.

*T. Pinto, United Kingdom*

My heartfelt thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for curing me of an illness and bringing me back to normal after several months.

*Mrs. D.G. Briggs, Bangalore*

### APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

JANUARY 2011

#### **General - Care for Creation**

*That the riches of the created world may be preserved, valued, and made available as God's precious gift to all.*

#### **Missionary - Unity of Christians**

*That Christians may attain full unity, witnessing to all the universal fatherhood of God.*

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## MARY WAS THERE

My belated thanks to Mother Mary for her protection from an accident that could have been fatal. On Wednesday 16th January 2008 I rushed to catch a train to be in time to attend the 7.00 am novena service at Mahim. Unable to let go of the handle of the compartment door and unable to get in, I was carried along with the train, literally flying over the platform as the train gathered speed. Just as I reached the end of the platform, a man held out his arms and caught hold of me, preventing me from falling off the platform and under the train. It surely was my Mother who sent an angel in the guise of that stranger and protected me that day. I have always entrusted my family and myself to her protection before setting out on any journey.

*Mrs. Aleyamma George, Mumbai*

**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.

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