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*At Christmas
we celebrate
the birth of the Saviour
who was given to us
through Mary,
and so
the whole Church
venerates her
as the Virgin and Mother*

Cover:
the boy Jesus (a detail)



From The Editor's Desk

New Every Morning

"Another year gone!" we say with a sad, reflective sigh. Then there's a twinge of anxiety about the year ahead. What will it bring? What misfortune will befall me or someone near me? What will I feel next year at this time? It's so safe to think and find

comfort with the past, no matter how terrible or traumatic it may have been, than with the future. New times seem to unsettle us, make us feel faintly uneasy, slightly anxious and even frightened.

But as Christians shouldn't our attitude be different? We should be grateful for the past, but not sad that it is gone. All that was good about it we still carry with us as memories that can always warm and sustain us. We are amazed about all that is sad. We have managed to endure and survive and that has surprised us! So long has God's power blessed us that it surely still will lead us on "o'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till the night is gone..." as the famous hymn we sing so often.

Our God is not a God of the past. The mistakes and failings about which we feel such pain and sorrow he gladly forgives.... *"Even though our sins be as scarlet he has washed them whiter than snow"* (Is 1:18) if we have let him in and acknowledge our weakness.

He speaks to us in the present, always reassuring us, telling us that he loves us and relies upon us to carry his light onwards for another year and that with his grace and power we will do even greater things in the past. What a breathtaking reassurance! He needs us to go out and stand up and speak out for him. It is an awesome responsibility and we cannot or will not shirk it because we're afraid! What a silly excuse.

Why can we not take him at his word and believe that he has even better things in store to give us than yesterday? It is a serious mistake to think that God's great graces were in the past and that never again will we be surprised by joy. How little we trust in his promises!

Scripture assures us clearly and definitely that this is not so. *"The Lord's true love,"* we are told, *"is surely not spent, nor has his compassion failed; they are new every morning, so great is his constancy"* (Lamentations 3:21-26).

As God's love for us is not spent, so neither is his power undermined by all the evil, ugliness and sin in the world. He is in control and, at his time and in his way, he will show us that our trust in him is not misplaced and that in his infinite wisdom he will work all things together unto good. This New Year is just unfolding and each moment is a grace and an opportunity that we can either take up and unwrap and reveal boldly to the world...or shy away from and let these 'graces' slip through our fingers and let God's graces fall away...to be lost forever!

Fr. Ian Douulton sdb

INTRODUCTION TO A NEW SERIES

Dear Readers,

Going by the comments we hear ever so often, we hope that you have profited from the series that has just ended. Like those that preceded it, the main theme has been the Eucharist and how we are challenged by it in ever new ways to live out the Covenant with the Father it inserts us into. This Covenant is indeed the mystery of God's faithful and steadfast love for us, in spite of our repeated backslidings.

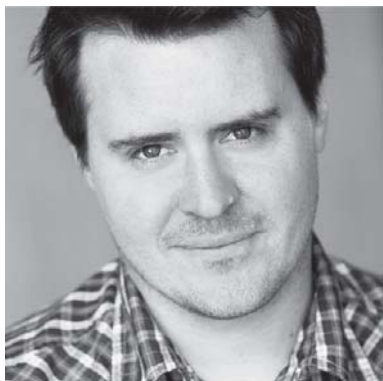
However, if at all we seek to benefit from God's gracious and never-ending offers to us, we need some recurring help and inspiration to goad us onto the path of generosity in our response. And so, we begin another series having basically the same theme: Eucharist, the source and summit of the life of the Church! Realizing that concrete examples of the success of others make a far greater impact than mere theory, we have again tried to capture in each article for the month, one facet of Eucharistic teaching in a real-life story of a person of our own times. Trusting that this effort will enable you to respond more generously to the call of Love, infinite, Incarnate Love, we place before you this series: do spend some time reflecting on its message, and if possible discuss some of its implications with family, friends and neighbours – I assure you it would immensely help all who do take part in this energetically. Could this group sharing occasionally take the place of the family rosary or evening prayer in the family?!? Also the example reviewed could be the subject of petitions in our family prayer from time to time!

Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss

FROM SELLING TO SERVING

Fr. Erasto Fernandez, sss

When a group of business owners and entrepreneurs were asked 'What are you doing to keep your business going in these post 2008 crazy-making economic times?' They came up with a variety of answers. Some spoke of the creative ways in which they were using social networking to market themselves; others told of how they had revamped their web sites and blogs while still others had tried exploring various new business ideas. When the author, B. J. Gallagher, began to chip in with his contribution, he observed that the audience was enveloped in deep silence: "I've stopped making sales calls", he began. "I make service calls instead." The look on the faces of others ranged



B.J. Gallagher

from confusion to curiosity, from disbelief to disdain. So he patiently explained what he had learned from Chuck Chamberlain who some years ago had given a series of lectures

entitled 'A New Pair of Glasses'.

Chuck had explained how he had become highly successful in his business... and very wealthy by replacing sales calls with *service calls*. Chuck had developed the strategy that whenever he called on a potential customer, he approached it as if he were helping a neighbour with a project, or visiting a friend in the hospital, or even reaching out to someone struggling with a serious personal problem - *in short, as an opportunity to be of service*. He also related how, in some isolated instances, he had a completely different motivation in calling on prospective customers ... on these occasions he was actually broke and desperate to make a sale. But, he soon realized that 'whenever I went on a call feeling like *'I NEED this sale; I HAVE to make some money today; I HAVE to close this deal'* - he came away empty-handed. 'I never once made a sale that way', he concluded! Invariably, when Chuck called on people in order to *get* something from them, he ended up a failure. When he called on people in order to *serve* them, he always clinched a deal. That was his 'secret' of success!

Sincere to the Core

He also learnt that this gesture of offering help rather than selling a product called for absolute sincerity on his part. It was not just another sales gimmick aimed at softening the client! He would have to listen with no pre-set, self-centred agenda. Rather he would listen with an open mind and an open heart - with a genuine desire to

help the other person build his business. And if he could help the other he would. If he himself didn't have the right service at hand, he would call in anyone he knew who could refer the prospective customer to that other person. People generally are smart and intuitive and can pick up on another's energy; they know when the other is out to get something from them. When people resist sales pitches, it is usually because they know what the real agenda is all about - *YOU*. And ... people also know when your intent is *to help, to be of service, to contribute, to assist them in achieving their goals*. When you approach them with that intent, they welcome you. They trust you ... and they give you their business.

This practical lesson Chuck learnt reminds us of what St. Luke recounts in Acts 5:1-11. When Ananias and Saphira sold a plot of land with the intention of helping their needy Christian brethren, they decided to keep a part of the proceeds for themselves. Their intended generosity was a double-header! But St. Peter picked up the game pretty smartly and the upshot is worth noticing - both are reported as having died instantaneously! If this death is mainly a 'spiritual' death, it simply says that they had ceased existing as Christians - chosen ones to whom Jesus had addressed his Eucharistic command: "Do this as a memorial of me!"

Gift of Oneself

What Jesus had just done before issuing this command was, "he took the bread, said the blessing, broke the bread and gave it to his



Chuck Chamberlain

disciples, saying: Take this all of you and eat of it. For this is my body which is given up for you! And then he added, 'Do this as a memorial of Me!' In the context of the Last Supper then every Christian is invited to continue the selfless giving of oneself to the needy neighbour – it is only in this way that the Kingdom of God can be built among people. For as long as there is even a trace of self-seeking, people will remain divided one from the other, each seeking to take advantage of the other as often as the occasion presents itself. And there were innumerable examples of such total selfless giving in the early Church – Barnabas is cited as an outstanding example! The result of such pure altruism among the group was that 'there was not a single needy person among them!' (Acts 5:34). What a glowing picture of Jesus' alternative way of living in society – one that the world today needs desperately.

Contemporary Expressions

There were quite a few such generous and selfless persons in the early Church just as there are several among us today as well. Many who generously choose to follow this altruistic way of life may not even profess to be followers of Jesus, yet they practice this principle inspired perhaps by a modern-day expression of it: the '100/0 Principle'. This principle states that whenever we give to another who is in need, we seek to give the maximum (100%) without even for a moment counting the cost – all the while expecting nothing (0%) in return for ourselves except the joy of giving in gratitude for what we ourselves have received abundantly! Of course, this principle demands a lot more than is expressed in the simple title, yet invariably the one who follows this principle experiences something out of the ordinary! S/he doesn't have to go around announcing that s/he gives 100% while expecting nothing – s/he simply practices it at every instance and others pick it up in no time, often desiring to follow their example when they come across a fitting opportunity! And experience shows that quite a number of people spontaneously choose to follow this same path of selfless giving in response to the stimulating example they have witnessed.

How different life in a family would become when all the members are committed to this way of living. This is particularly significant in a Christian family, because by definition a Christian is "one who lives not for himself but for others," (Eucharistic Prayer IV, §3) and that not just

when he is rolling in excess wealth, but precisely when he himself lacks the wherewithal for his own frugal existence! Families where this principle prevails are generally happy and well-adjusted families and they are the most sought after in the entire neighbourhood or parish.

Source and Inspiration

That such an altruistic way of life is not possible without God's superhuman grace goes without saying. For, the natural tendency of humans is to first seek their own well-being and comfort, and only then reach out to others who have less or nothing! It is only when one reflects dispassionately on how much God has blessed one with that one is capable of relating to others in this way. Unfortunately, most Christians are either not fully aware of what Jesus has gifted them with or don't realize its importance yet. And so it is worth refreshing our memories with Paul's assertion in his letter to the Ephesians, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ *with every spiritual blessing* in the heavenly places, just as he *chose us* in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for *adoption as his children* through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will..." (1:3-10).

Further, during the Last Supper itself, Jesus gave us his new commandment, 'that you love one another as I have loved you!' (Jn. 13:34). Jesus would never expect us to climb to these heights of selfless love without empowering us adequately for the task! And so,

on the same occasion he promised us the gift of the Holy Spirit who would lead us to the whole truth and empower us from within! St. Paul too bases most of his moral teaching regarding the daily living out of our Christian commitment precisely on this principle: "In fact, to have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? But you yourselves wrong and defraud - and believers at that" (1 Cor. 6:7-8). To crown all his teaching he gives us his own example when he says, "and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him" (2 Tim 1:12).

Conclusion

With this kind of an approach to life, one cannot but wonder: *What would our regular day-to-day business be like if everyone made service calls instead of sales calls? What would happen if all business people adopted an attitude of 'How can I serve?' instead of 'What can I get out of this transaction?' What would Wall Street be like? What would Main Street be like? What would the world be like? Wouldn't we then be witnessing the "new heaven and the new earth" which Jesus has established through his painful death on the Cross and its glorious sequel, the Resurrection? Would we not all be 'the salt of the earth and light of the world' and the true leaven which transforms the entire universe from within!?* □

CRADLE OF OUR FAITH

by Jill Sheehan



As I began to reflect on the childhood of Christ I became aware of how little we know about it. Isn't it amazing that we have so little information about the early years of this man who influenced and changed the lives of so many?

Early Years

As small children our first introduction to the person of Jesus was through pictures and stories of the baby Jesus. A very important part of Christmas was the visit to the crib. I remember being delighted that the donkey and the cow were there to keep him warm! The arrival of the Three Wise Men on the Feast of

the Epiphany brought a certain sadness with it: soon the crib would disappear and not return for another year.

We know that Mary and Joseph, acting according to the Law of Moses took Jesus to be presented in the temple in Jerusalem. There Simeon was waiting to see Christ the Lord before he died. Taking the child in his arms he praised God, and then, blessing Mary and Joseph, he said to Mary, 'Look, he is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is opposed - and a sword will pierce your soul too - so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare'. Strange

words! How Mary and Joseph must have wondered about their meaning as they went back with their child to Galilee.

Growing Up

As Jesus grew into boyhood he became familiar with the practice of religion in daily life. The Sabbath would have been a day of quiet and rest, when all good Jews attended the synagogue and meals were family occasions for relaxing together, having been prepared the previous day. It reminds me of how special were Sundays in our lives before the world of commerce took over; then Sundays were family days, beginning with Mass in our 'Sunday best' clothes.

*Parents are called
to be as generous
in letting their children
grow to independence
as in nurturing
the helpless infant.*

At school Jesus would have learned the history of his people and heard about the heroes of his nation. Though Jesus' first language was Aramaic he learned Hebrew at school. School and family were surely at one in passing on to him the truths of the Jewish religion and the values of a good life. In our day, too, family and school can be most effective when they share a common vision, a common faith and a shared set of values.

When Jesus was twelve, the Holy Family joined their

neighbours on their way up to Jerusalem, to celebrate the Passover. As we know, Mary and Joseph lost Jesus for three days. Like any anxious mother in similar circumstances, Mary, on finding her son, rebuked him with the words, 'My child, why have you done this to us?'

Even at that age Jesus was feeling the stirrings of his life's mission to be busy about his Father's affairs. Mary and Joseph didn't really understand Jesus' reply: 'Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' But they probably knew that his call from God would be special and would demand of them much self-sacrifice and generosity. Parents are called to be as generous in letting their children grow to independence as in nurturing the helpless infant.

Returning to Nazareth, in his daily life Jesus must have worked with Joseph in the carpenter's shop, doing all the ordinary household chores, growing in intimacy with Mary and Joseph and sharing in the joys and struggles of the neighbours around him. Through such ordinary activities he grew in intimacy with his Father also. And it's through the ordinary, day-to-day life of our families that children learn to know God as their loving Father and to entrust their lives to him.

Beyond all doubt, Jesus experienced in the home of Nazareth a reflection of his home in heaven. This was the cradle of our faith. May all our homes be cradles of faith. □

LUIGI VARIARA 1875 - 1923

Luigi Variara was born at Viarigi in the province of Asti on January 15, 1875 in a deeply Christian family. His father had heard of Don Bosco in 1856 when he came to his town to preach a mission. Now he decided to take Luigi to Valdocco so he could pursue his studies. The saint would die four months later but the memory of him would remain with Luigi for the rest of his life. He finished his middle school and asked to become a Salesian. He entered the novitiate on August 17, 1891, completed his philosophical studies at Valsalice where he came to know Fr. Andrea Baltrami. he was struck by the joy with which he accepted his sickness. In 1894 Fr. Unia, the celebrated missionary of the lepers of Agua de Dios came to Valsalice to choose a cleric who could look after the young lepers. Of the 88 students who all desired to go, fixing his gaze on Variara he said: "This is mine!" Luigi reached Agua de Dios on August 6, 1894. The settlement consisted of 2000 inhabitants of whom 800 were lepers. As soon as he reached there Luigi was determined to assist all especially the children. He organized the band bringing much joy to the sick patients. In 1895 Fr. Unia died and Luigi was left alone with Fr. Crippa. In 1898 Luigi was ordained a priest and he immediately took on the role of spiritual director.



In 1905 he completed the construction of the "Hospice of Fr. Unia" a home to care for 150 orphans and lepers assuring them of a trade and a future insertion into society. At Agua de Dios, near the Sisters of Providence he formed the association of the daughters of Mary, a group of 200 girls. Fr. Luigi was their confessor. He identified some individuals in the group as being called to religious life. From this was born a fervent project - unique in the Church - an institute that would accept even those with leprosy. Inspired by the spirituality of Fr. Beltrami he developed the Salesian charism of sacrifice souls and founded the Congregation of the "Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary", to have about 600 religious. He died at Cucuta in Colombia on February 1, 1923 far from those he loved as obedience demanded. His remains lie at Agua de Dios in the chapel of the sisters. □



The Compassionate Christ his Model
Fr Edison Fernandes sdb

by Fr. Nelson Carvalho

Edison Fernandes was born on 24th May 1968, the feast of Mary Help of Christians. Ida, Edison's mother was a teacher at Don Bosco, Panjim and hence, it was but natural, that he be educated in that school.

When Edison was in Std. IX he heard that Fr. Benedict Furtado, the then Rector of Don Bosco, Panjim was taking a group of boys on a tour to Lonavla and Bombay. Since he kept insisting, Fr. Furtado agreed to take him along, and thus began his vocation journey. Out of the 35 boys that went on that vocation tour only two were ordained priests (Edison and Francisco Pinto).

He made his first profession on 24th May 1986 and was ordained a priest on 21st December 1996. His ordination motto was: *"He had compassion on them"* (Mt 9:36). His most significant experiences were his encounters with two Salesians: Frs. Benedict Furtado and Dominic Veliath. These two Salesians, through their example and mentoring, helped him discover and cherish his call to be a Salesian. He emphatically states that a major portion of who he is today, he owes to them.

He served in the Konkan region, at the Novitiate at Nashik, while also teaching Philosophy at Divyadaan. After completing his PhD studies in Psychology and Counselling he came to Pune, then he had a short stint in Rome after which he returned to Nashik and then to DBYC, Pune.

Reflecting over these past years,



Edison's greatest fulfilment has come from ministering to various people, especially through the Sacraments and Counselling. He is grateful for opportunity to teach and mentor young Salesians to be courageous and happy in pursuing the will of God in their lives.

Looking into the future, the personal goal he has set for himself is growing in his love for God and the Salesian Congregation. Further, he sees himself as a priest focussing on enhancing the spiritual and psychological well-being of people especially the young.

Edison is blessed with an enviable gift of humour and wit that flavours his presence in the community.

"Those to whom much is given, much is expected in return". Yes, Edison has been abundantly blessed by God with gifts of heart and mind, and he in turn keeps giving in great abundance. □

Witnesses in & for Our Times



ST. ELIZABETH ANN SETON (1774-1821) (JANUARY 4)

with contributions from www.newadvent.org

She was the foundress and first superior of the Sisters of Charity in the United States; born in New York City, 28 Aug., 1774, of non-Catholic parents of high position; died at Emmitsburg, Maryland, 4 Jan., 1821.

Her father, Dr. Richard Bayley (born in Connecticut and educated in England), was the first professor of anatomy at Columbia College and eminent for his work as health officer of the Port of New York. Her mother, Catherine Charlton, daughter of an Anglican minister of Staten Island, N.Y., died when Elizabeth was three years old, leaving two other young daughters. She was very religious, wore a small crucifix around her neck, and took great delight in reading the Scriptures, especially the Psalms, a practice she retained until her death.

She was married on 25 Jan., 1794, in St. Paul's Church, New York, to William Magee Seton, of that city, by Bishop Prevoost. In her sister-in-law, Rebecca Seton,



she found the "friend of her soul", and as they went about on missions of mercy they were called the "Protestant Sisters of Charity". From a journal which Mrs. Seton kept during her travels we learn of her heroic effort to sustain the drooping spirits of her sick husband during a voyage, followed by a long detention in quarantine, and until his death at Pisa (27 Dec., 1803). She and her daughter remained for some time with the Filicchi families. While with these Catholic families and in the churches of Italy Mrs. Seton

first began to see the beauty of the Catholic Faith.

A time of great spiritual perplexity began for Mrs. Seton, whose prayer was, "If I am right Thy grace impart still in the right to stay. If I am wrong oh, teach my heart to find the better way." Mr. Hobart (afterwards an Anglican bishop), who had great influence over her, used every effort to dissuade her from joining the Catholic Church, while Mr. Filicchi presented the claims of the true religion and arranged a correspondence between Elizabeth and Bishop Cheverus. Through Mr. Filicchi she also wrote to Bishop Carroll. Elizabeth meanwhile added fasting to her prayers for light. The result was that on Ash Wednesday, 14 March, 1805, she was received into the Church by Father Matthew O'Brien in St. Peter's Church, Barclay Street, New York. On 25 March she made her first Communion with extraordinary fervour. She well understood the storm that her conversion would raise among her Protestant relatives and friends at the time she most needed their help. She joined an English Catholic gentleman named White, who, with his wife, was opening a school for boys in the suburbs of New York, but the widely circulated report that this was a proselytizing scheme forced the school to close.

A few faithful friends arranged for Mrs. Seton to open a boarding house for some of the boys of a Protestant school taught by the curate of St. Mark's. In January, 1806, Cecilia Seton, Elizabeth's young sister-in-law, became very ill and begged to see the

ostracized convert; Mrs. Seton was sent for, and became a constant visitor. Cecilia told her that she desired to become a Catholic. When Cecilia's decision was known threats were made to have Mrs. Seton expelled from the state by the Legislature. On her recovery Cecilia fled to Elizabeth for refuge and was received into the Church. She returned to her brother's family on his wife's death. Mrs. Seton's boarding-house for boys had to be given up. Her sons had been sent by the Filicchis to Georgetown College. She hoped to find a refuge in some convent in Canada, where her teaching would support her three daughters. Bishop Carroll did not approve, so she relinquished this plan. Father Dubourg, S.S., from St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore, met her in New York, and suggested opening in Baltimore a school for girls. After a long delay and many privations, she and her daughters reached Baltimore on Corpus Christi, 1808. Her boys were brought there to St. Mary's College, and she opened a school next to the chapel of St. Mary's Seminary and was delighted with the opportunities for the practice of her religion, for it was only with the greatest difficulty she was able to get to daily Mass and Communion in New York. The convent life for which she had longed ever since her stay in Italy now seemed less impracticable. Her life was that of a religious, and her quaint costume was fashioned after one worn by certain nuns in Italy. Cecilia Conway of Philadelphia, who had contemplated going

to Europe to fulfill her religious vocation, joined her; soon other postulants arrived, while the little school had all the pupils it could accommodate.

Mr. Cooper, a Virginian convert and seminarian offered \$10,000 to found an institution for teaching poor children. As a preliminary to the formation of the new community Mrs. Seton took vows privately before Archbishop Carroll and her daughter Anna. In June, 1809, the community was transferred to Emmitsburg to take charge of the new institution. The great fervour and mortification of Mother Seton, imitated by her sisters, made the many hardships of their situation seem light.

Against her will, and despite the fact that she had also to care for her children, Mrs. Seton was elected superior. Many joined the community; Mother Seton's daughter, Anna, died during her novitiate (12 March, 1812), but had been permitted to pronounce her vows on her death-bed. Mother Seton and the eighteen sisters made their vows on 19 July, 1813. The fathers superior of the community were the Sulpicians, Fathers Dubourg, David, and Dubois. Father Dubois held the post for fifteen years and laboured to impress on the community the spirit of St. Vincent's Sisters of Charity, forty of whom he had had under his care in France. In 1814 the sisters were given charge of an orphan asylum in Philadelphia; in 1817 they were sent to New York. The previous year (1816) Mother Seton's daughter, Rebecca, after long suffering, died at Emmitsburg; her son Richard, who was placed with the Filicchi

firm in Italy, died a few years after his mother.

Mother Seton had great facility in writing. Besides the translation of many ascetical French works (including the life of Saint Vincent de Paul, and of Mlle. Le Gras) for her community she has left copious diaries and correspondence that show a soul all on fire with the love of God and zeal for souls. Great spiritual desolation purified her soul during a great portion of her religious life, but she cheerfully took the royal road of the cross. For several years the saintly bishop (then Father) Brutti was her director. The third time she was elected mother (1819) she protested that it was the election of the dead, but she lived for two years, suffering finally from a pulmonary infection. Her perfect sincerity and great charm aided her wonderfully in the work of sanctifying souls. In 1880 Cardinal Gibbons (then Archbishop) urged the steps be taken toward her canonization. The result of the official inquiries in the cause of Mother Seton, held in Baltimore during several years, were brought to Rome by special messenger, and placed in the hands of the postulator of the cause on 7 June, 1911.

With the Newark and Halifax offshoots of the New York community and the Greenburg foundation from Cincinnati, the sisters originating from Mother Seton's foundation number (1911) about 6000. Elizabeth Ann Seton was beatified in 1963 and canonized on September 14, 1975.□

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Trading Caps

I have a friend who filled his car with gas at a self-service gas station. After he had paid and driven away, he realized that he had left the gas cap on top of his car. He stopped and looked and, sure enough, it was lost.

Well, he thought for a second and realized that other people must have done the same thing, and that it was worth going back to look by the side of the road since even if he couldn't find his own gas cap, he might be able to find one that fit. Sure enough, he hadn't been searching long when he found a gas cap. He tried it on, and it went into place with a satisfying click.

"Great," he thought, "I lost my gas cap, but I found another one that fits."

And this one's even better because it locks..."

Yesterday Computer Song

Do you know the song "Yesterday"? Then sing along to this computer version.

Yesterday, All those backups seemed a waste of pay.

Now my database has gone away. Oh I believe in yesterday.

Suddenly, There's not half the files there used to be,

And there's a milestone hanging over me. The system crashed so suddenly.

I pushed something wrong. What it was I could not say.

Now all my data's gone and I long for yesterday-ay-ay-ay.

Yesterday, The need for back-ups seemed so far away.

I knew my data was all here to stay, Now I believe in yesterday.

Pierced Ears

The students in my third-grade class were bombarding me with questions about my newly pierced ears.

"Does the hole go all the way through?" "Yes."

"Did it hurt?" "Just a little."

"Did they stick a needle through your ears?" "No, they used a special gun."

Silence followed, and then one solemn voice called out, "How far away did they stand?"

Marriage Wakeup

As Barb was getting to know David and his family, she was very impressed by how much his parents loved each other.

"They're so thoughtful," Barb said. "Why, your dad even brings your mom a cup of hot coffee in bed every morning."

After a time, Barb and David were engaged, and then married. On the way from the wedding to the reception, Barb again remarked on David's loving parents, and even the coffee in bed.

"Tell me," she said, "does it run in the family?"

"It sure does," replied David. "And I take after my mom."

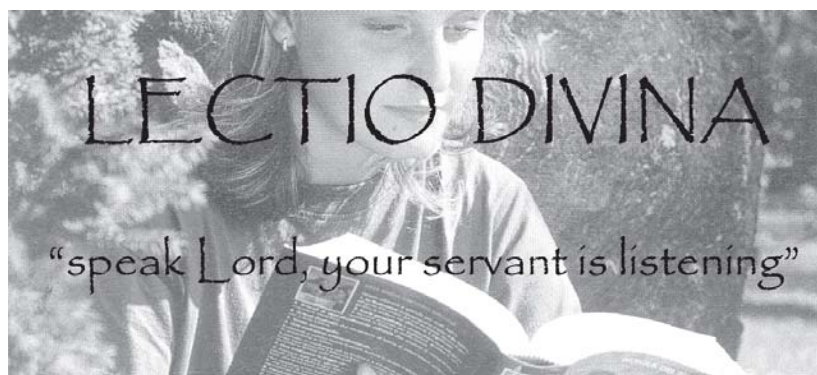
Sick Day

Our local newspaper ran several stories about a study that tied male obesity to a virus.

One evening my brother came home exhausted from a long day at work.

"Did you read the paper?" he asked.

"I'm not going in to work tomorrow. I'm calling in fat." □



THE SALVATION OF JESUS AND THE PEOPLE OF NAZARETH

by Carlo Broccardo

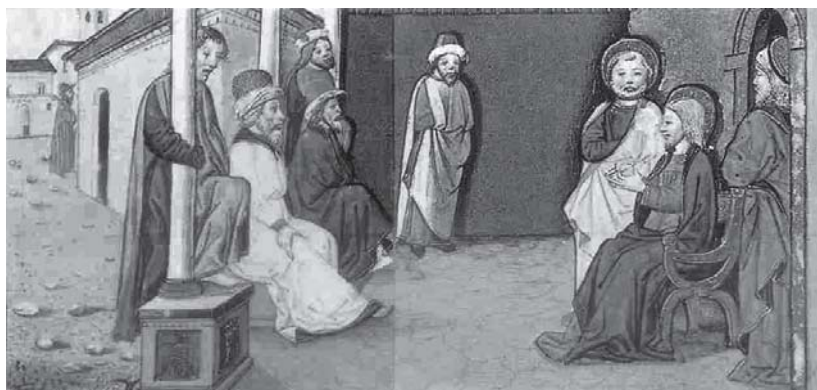
A few weeks after Christmas, precisely during the month of January, we will hear a passage from the Gospel according to Luke read to us which will tell us of the day that Jesus, after having overcome the temptations in the desert, preached in the synagogue of Nazareth (Lk 4:16-30). Luke emphasizes several times that Jesus came right there to his own home, to the place where he had been brought up, in the synagogue where he used to pray and where everyone knew him and his family very well. Nazareth was his home, and yet he was not been accepted there. Why?

Actually in the beginning the villagers were happy with him: Luke writes that “all spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.” What was it that he said that was so beautiful? He must have said something like this: ‘Do you remember Isaiah

when he promised the people of Israel salvation? Well, today those words are coming true, and today I say to you: God has sent me to proclaim salvation to his children, with my coming poverty will end and there will be no more oppression; even disease will be no more. I am the one whom the Lord has anointed. I am the one who is called in Hebrew “Messiah” and Greek “Christ.”

At Christmas the angels had promised that this child was the Messiah, the Saviour of Israel, the long awaited one, invoked in all our prayers. Now Jesus reveals this news first to his countrymen, saying to them: I am the Messiah! You do not need to wait any longer, the time is fulfilled! They were thrilled to hear this and we can accept that. He, the one for whom the people of Israel were waiting was among them!

But then something went wrong. In the second part of the passage (which will be heard



From illustrations found in the Codex De Predis (1476)

during Mass on the following Sunday) the reaction of the people of Nazareth was completely different. Those who first spoke well of him, who were willing to swear by him, were now railing against him. "When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with anger." They even tried to kill him. Note the 'everyone' without exception; everyone had it in for Jesus. But was what he said so serious? He just made them understand what was behind those words that made them ask, "Is not this Joseph's son?" (Which is not really a question, but a way of saying: we know who the son of Joseph is). Behind these seemingly innocuous words and gestures one discovers a mistaken attitude.

Perhaps we could call it selfishness, in the sense that they only thought of themselves: the people of Nazareth thought of the "rich" messianic benefits; if Jesus is one of us - they reflected - surely he will work wonders for us, bringing release to us, the healing and peace of which Isaiah spoke. Try to picture Jesus as a

mountain stream and his countrymen wanting to direct that stream carefully so that it would bring fresh water to their own vegetable gardens... But Jesus emphatically said that his salvation was not just for a few intimate friends. He had come for everyone, no one could declare him to be private property and keep him to themselves.

The people of Nazareth were not the only ones of their kind. We, however, can learn from their mistakes. Because the temptation to bind Jesus close into our schemes is always present: for example, when we criticize those who live the faith differently from us or when we judge those who make mistakes while practicing their faith. We need, rather, to re-read the words of Luke, listen to this Gospel passage fervently. If Jesus is the source of pure water he wants to quench everyone's thirst... without exception, and if we or anyone sends someone away - or even if anyone is lost because of his sins, Jesus will tell us that "the Son of man is come to seek and save those who are lost" (Lk 19,10). ▢

THE TASTE

The First Angelus Message for the

At noon on Sunday 1 January, 2011 before leading the Angelus with the faithful in St. Peter's Square the Holy Father reflected on Our Lady, "whose greatest title we celebrate today: Mother of God." He also focused on the theme of this World Day: "Educating Young People in Justice and Peace." The following is a translation of the Pope's Reflection which was given in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The triple biblical blessing rings out in the liturgy on this first day of the year. "The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace" (Num 6:24-26). We can contemplate the Face of God he himself made visible, he revealed himself in Jesus; he is the visible image of the invisible God. And



this is also thanks to the Virgin Mary, whose greatest title we celebrate today; the title with which she plays a unique role in the history of salvation, as Mother of God. In her womb the Son of the Most High took our flesh and we can contemplate his glory (cf. Jn 1:14), and feel his presence as God-with-us.

Thus we begin the New Year 2012 by fixing our gaze on the Face of God, who is revealed in the Child of Bethlehem, and on his Mother Mary who accepted the divine plan with humble abandonment. Thanks to her generous "yes", the true light that enlightens every man appeared in the world (cf. Jn 1:9) and

FOR TRUTH

year by H.H. Pope Benedict XVI

the way of peace was reopened to us.

Dear brothers and sisters, today, by now a felicitous custom, we are celebrating the 45th World Day of Peace. In the Message I addressed to Heads of State, Representatives of Nations and to all people of good will whose theme is "Educating Young People in Justice and Peace", I wished to recall the need to offer the future generations suitable educational curricula for an integral formation of the person which includes the moral and spiritual dimension (cf. n. 3).

I wished to underline in particular the importance of teaching the values of justice and peace. Young people today look to the future with a certain apprehension, drawing attention to certain aspects of their life that need to be addressed, for example: "they want to receive an education which prepares them more fully to deal with the real world, they see how difficult it is to form a family and to find stable employment; they wonder if they can really contribute to political, cultural and economic life in order to build a society with a more human and fraternal face" (n. 1).

I ask you all to have the patience and perseverance to seek justice and peace, to cultivate the taste for what is just and true (cf. n. 5). Peace is never a good fully achieved, but a goal for which we must all strive and for which we must all work.

Let us therefore pray, despite the difficulties that sometimes make our way arduous, that this profound aspiration may be expressed in concrete gestures of reconciliation, justice and peace. Let us also pray that the leaders of nations may renew their readiness and commitment to accept and encourage this irrepressible longing of humanity. Let us entrust these wishes to the intercession of the Mother of the "King of Peace", so that the year which is beginning may be a time of hope and of peaceful coexistence for the whole world.

After the Angelus:

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I thank everyone with affection, especially for the gift of prayer. I express my appreciation of the numerous initiatives of prayer for peace and of reflection on the theme I proposed in my Message for today's World Day.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom we honour today as Mother of God, always guide and protect us, helping us to grow in love for her Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. May God bless all of you!

A Happy New Year to everyone! □

THE CHRIST OF TULAIN MOUNTAIN

From Fr. Ian Douulton's collection of stories

The brakeman kicked Willie off the train in the middle of nowhere. For the first time in thirty-five years he was out in the woods and he was alone: a world away from East 14th Street: the crowds, the bars and the nightclubs he had known all his life. Even though he could find his way back, he didn't dare. Some of the fellows who'd been in prison with him recently were looking for him and they were angry. Now he tried to get up and walk on, but hunger bent him double. He had not eaten for three days. He was at the end of his rope and he knew it. He leaned his head against a nearby tree and began to cry. Something moved in the bushes and Willie started up in fear. Then far ahead of him, against the side of a steep hill he saw the white walls of the monastery.

Fr. Columba found Willie at noontime. As he opened the door of the monastery he almost stepped on the man lying just on the doorstep. Fr. Columba sniffed him as though he was drunk.

"From the city, aren't you?" asked Father.

Willie groaned and with some help from Fr. Columba he made it to the monastery guest-room. Having put Willie on the bed in the guestroom Fr. Columba removed his shoes, only to find his feet blistered and cut. He washed him lovingly applied some salve and bandaged his feet. Willie was almost

unconscious. For five mornings Willie opened his eyes - the room was quiet and the bed was hard but had clean sheets. Several times a day Willie heard the peal of bells and heard the slap of sandaled feet in the corridor outside. He realised that the monks were going to chapel and the thought comforted him. He did not know why even though he had never said a prayer in his life.

At noon on the sixth day he got out of bed and put on his clothes. They were tattered, but they were all he had. He weakly crept outside and painfully lowered himself onto a bench in the sunlight. It was here that he spent most of his time for the next six days. One afternoon Fr. Columba found him there dozing.

Willie stood up and thrust something into the monk's hand. Fr. Columba wondered what it was.

"Something for you" said Willie mildly. It was a statue of the Christ child.

"Where did you get it?" asked Fr Columba. "I made it...carved it out of a hunk of wood I found lying in the corner of the room."

Willie had seen the picture of the baby in one of the magazines that Fr. Columba had given him to browse through, while he was in bed.

He was impressed and wondered where Willie had learned woodcarving (little knowing that he had learnt it in the penitentiary from which he



had escaped).

"You're well now Willie," said Fr. Columba as he walked away. Fr. Columba went away and Willie sat down knowing that Fr. Columba's words were a gentle hint that he had to move on. He wandered about through the monastery grounds. Everywhere he saw brothers working, milking cows, digging in the kitchen garden, pulling up stumps. They smiled at him, but he ducked his head in shame.

This was it! This was the reason he could not stay. He was idle. He wasn't earning his bread. He wandered up to the foot of the mountain and there in a ditch he found the tree trunk. It was well over twenty feet long and four feet across. A thought came to him suddenly. It was so grand that it had turned him pale. He had found the job he was looking for! But could he handle it? Later that same night Fr. Columba was passing along the corridor when he heard a noise that stopped him short. It was a sound he recognized but had never expected to hear it in a monastery.

The sound was coming from Willie's room. Fr. Columba opened the door so quietly that Willie never looked up from where he was kneeling on the floor.

"Come on, be kind to Willie!" Willie was throwing dice to see whether he should stay or go. Fr. Columba gently asked Willie for the dice and then for an explanation. Willie told him the whole story. He told him that he had been in jail for robbery.

Fr. Columba then told Willie who he had been. He had been a criminal lawyer before he joined the monastery. "Come on Willie, and I'll show you the best thing to do with these dice." So saying Fr. Columba took Willie to his cell and pointed to a statue.

"That's St. Dismas, the good thief. He was just a thief, until he told Our Lord he was sorry he had stolen and he became a saint." So saying he placed the dice at the feet of the statue. Fr. Columba could not bear to see Willie in his rags so, as an exception, the following morning Willie was allowed to wear one of the monks habits. You won't exactly be a brother. We'll just call you a "brother helper."

But late that night Willie disappeared. He was not even present for morning prayers. Fr. Columba shook his head. But at lunchtime Willie was back. He said nothing but he wore a strangely self-satisfied smile. From then on he ate at the end of the table with the brothers and even trailed after them into chapel. He squeezed himself into a corner of the last pew and wordlessly thanked the 'friend' he had just found.

Most of his time he spent on the hillside, working away at the tree trunk. The corn was ripening, and it was three weeks before Fr. Columba found the time to go up the mountainside to find out what

Willie was doing.

'What's it going to be Willie?' asked Fr. Columba.

It was very hard wood and Willie would need some rather sharp tools. Fr. Columba's eyes chanced on the tools at Willie's side. They were new tools and they were not from the monastery workshop. "I don't remember seeing them around here before," said Fr. Columba dubiously. Willie became rather restless and decided it was enough for the day.

Fr. Columba tried to coax him to carry on working and then he returned to his office in the monastery. He could not help thinking of how Willie had disappeared some time ago. He made a phone call to the nearest town of Tulain and up the following morning came Bob Russell, dealer in hardware. Fr. Columba asked Bob if he had been missing some tools about three weeks earlier.

"Yes, somebody broke in and took a whole set," he said curiously.

"I think I know where they are. Will you come with me up to the mountain? I'll tell you all about Willie on the way." They walked up the mountain path leading to where Willie was.

Bob Russell had never been to the monastery before even though he lived in the nearest town. He found no reason to get near any 'church place' as he called it. Seeing the monks at work he was astonished. He thought that all they did was pray. He saw a monk ploughing and another digging. The whole mountainside looked luscious and green. It was something he



hardly expected. "I never thought you did anything useful," said Bob Russell cynically yet candidly.

Bob hardly considered praying useful. "You see I am an atheist. Nobody can prove to me that there is a God..." - At this point in their conversation the two of them reached the spot where Willie was working. He was tapping away all alone.

"He's been doing that all by himself and with your tools!" said Fr. Columba.

Fr. Columba apologized and promised to send Bob a cheque the following morning for the tools Willie had stolen but Bob was so astonished that he refused Fr. Columba's offer outright.

The next morning a delivery-man brought a box to the monastery. It was from the hardware store, and in it was a set of the finest wood working tools with a note on them. "*Willie didn't pick up the right set.*" The day after, Bob Russell himself came up to the mountain and stood frowning and watching Willie at work the young runaway said nothing because silence was becoming a habit with him and peace came in a quick second. He remembered his past without regret. He thought of his mother who had

occasionally loved him and occasionally beaten him. He found words to pray for her and for his old companions those in Sing-Sing and Alcatraz and the one who had died in the electric chair.

Then he went back to his work. Some days it proceeded swiftly while on others seemed not to progress at all.

Two years he chipped away at the wood fitting it gradually to the picture in his mind. Now and then Bob Russell came and watched him. It was Bob Russell who was there that day in the second year when Willie lay down his chisel as if he would never pick it up again!

"I've been stuck for days" said Willie discouraged.

"I know how that is," said Bob, munching on a blade of grass, "the picture comes and goes..." he was trying to sound encouraging. They got into talking of how Willie had pictured Christ with arms outstretched. Bob indicated to Willie that the arms should look inviting. It should look something like the way Fr. Columba found Willie the first time when he almost stepped on him at the monastery door.

Two years from the day he began to carve Willie laid down his tools. The tree trunk had become a statue. The brothers built a base of uncut stone for it and one morning they placed it on the highest point of Tulain mountain. Bob Russell was there watching; the only outsider. They stood in silence and looked at the statue which was like no other they had ever seen. Christ faced them as a young man with eyes that knew real sorrow and a



mouth that smiled genuinely and constantly. He held his arms low and outstretched as if to coax to himself a lost and frightened child.

The brothers sang a hymn and then they silently started down the mountain. Fr. Columba and Willie turned back for a last look. "Father! Mr. Russell is still there. He is just standing still looking at the statue." "Come away quietly," said Fr. Columba, "and leave him alone. He's found what he's been looking for."

Bob Russell was the first of many. Word went around about the Christ of Tulain mountain. Men and women came by the hundreds and then by the thousands. They still come. Those who believe go away strengthened in faith. Those who do not believe are less proud of their unbelief. Bob Russell for instance took all the tools that had been used for making the statue and placed them in his store window. Over them he put a sign that read: With these tools, Brother Willie carved the Christ of Tulain Mountain." And when anybody asks: "Who is Brother Willie and what's special about the Christ of Tulain mountain?"

Bob Russell has some good answers. □

DON BOSCO'S INVOLVEMENT WITH THE CHURCH AND STATE 13

by Fr. Elias Dias sdb

The Church is nothing without its members and for which reason – during his lifetime, Don Bosco contributed his mite to build up the Church.

Don Bosco was the product of the history of his time and of the formation he received at the institutions of that era. He was born during the time of Restoration in Italy, a period from the fall of Napoleon (1814) to the revolutions of 1848 in Europe commonly referred to as the Restoration Period. This term refers to the reinstatement of the legitimate rulers deposed by Napoleon. The principal powers of Europe met at the Congress of Vienna from September 1814 to June 1815, in order to restore the old order and its practices. In society the ordinary Catholic believed in the authority of the Church but the distinguishing features of the Restoration were its reaction against Jansenism and Gallicanism which had great influence on the life of Don Bosco. In Italy too there was a movement to unite itself under a constitutional monarchy. This movement was called the *Risorgimento*. Giuseppe Garibaldi campaigned for this state and took over the city of Rome in 1870. Pope Pius IX convoked the



First Vatican Council in 1868 and on April 24, 1870 it promulgated the decree "Pastor Aeternus" defining the jurisdictional primacy and the Infallibility of the Pope. Don Bosco saw that the liberal revolution in Italy would gradually secularize society. The movement for the unification of Italy and the Italian parliament enacted a law on March 17, 1861 which deprived the Church of its temporal powers.

Don Bosco wrote a great deal about the Church; 20 books and booklets as well as 24 historical works in which the Church featured predominantly. This was because, as a seminarian Don Bosco listened to the long History of the Church by the ex-Jesuit Berault Bareastel which was read during meals. On his own he read the 27 volume History of the Church by Abbé Claude Fleury without knowing that it was forbidden and the entire History

of the Church by Henrion. He wrote the History of the Church for the children and the lives of the Popes in order to avoid the hatred and the aversion that was growing for the popes. His main preoccupation was to serve the Church and the Pope. When Pope Pius IX was in exile at Gaeta the boys of the Oratory collected 33 lire and offered it to the Pope. The Pope reciprocated by sending 720 rosaries which reached Turin on 21, April 1850. On March 28, 1880 Don Bosco accepted the proposal of the Cardinal Vicar, Monaco La Vallengta to build the Church of the Sacred Heart in Rome. (The Salesian tradition holds that Pope Leo XIII asked Don Bosco to construct the Basilica of Sacred Heart in Rome.) It was consecrated on May 12, 1887.

Don Bosco firmly believed that the Church and the Pope were guided and protected by God. On May 30, 1862 he narrated a dream called the dream of "The Two Columns." Predicting great crises in the Church of Italy, he told his listeners that he saw a vast expanse of water with countless ships in battle array. The ships were armed with cannons and other arms. They were attacking the big ship. A storm tossed the sea favoured the enemy. At this point in the midst of the trouble two very tall columns appeared in the sea. One was surmounted by a statue of the Immaculate Virgin with a large inscription "Help of Christians" and other much taller had a Host surmounted on it with the inscription "Salvation of believers" The captain made every effort to steer his ship between the two columns. Some ships tried to defend the big ship.

In the battle the captain fell and died. The other captains elected a successor. The ship was now anchored between the two columns and a great calm came over the sea. Don Bosco asked Fr. Rua "What do you make of this story?" Fr. Rua replied "I think that the big ship symbolizes the Church of which the Pope is the Head. The ships symbolize people and the sea is the world. Those who rallied in defense of the large ship represented the good people who are devoted to the Holy See. That was how Don Bosco showed that God was protecting and defending the Church and the Pope.

Don Bosco never thought that he was an important person nor was he highly placed in Church circles. He was not involved in politics or in public life but yet this humble priest of peasant stock realizing the political crises in the Church was involved in Church-state negotiations in a very private capacity. The negotiations undertaken between the Holy See and the Italian government were never aimed at a political reconciliation between the two parties but he was concerned about the problem of the nomination and appointment of bishops to vacant dioceses who were either expelled or imprisoned or had died and he had obtained for them the "Exequatur." The Exequatur was the state-issued permit that enabled bishops to enter their sees and the "Temporalities" was a permission obtained from the Government to possess assets and revenues held by the government, needed to run the diocese - after their appointment.



Camillo Cavour

His earliest mediation began in 1858 in Turin when the Archbishop Luigi was in exile.

On February 24 1832 King Charles Albert requested the archbishop to hold this post and he did so for the next 30 years until his death in exile in 1862. During his first ten years in office the relationships with the monarchy and the state were normal. During the liberation revolution and the adoption of a new constitution in 1848, a gradual dissatisfaction developed. Pope Pius IX failed to support the war waged by Piedmont against Austria and was forced to flee the city. These confrontations affected the people, seminaries, theological schools and universities. The Pope became the target of anti-clerical attacks by the press. In 1848 under pressure the Archbishop went into voluntary exile to Switzerland he returned to

his diocese on February 26, 1850.

On January 9, 1850 the House of Representatives of the Kingdom of Sardinia in Turin approved a Bill presented by the Minister of Justice Count Giuseppe Siccardi which abolished some of the ancient privileges such as separate ecclesiastical courts and the immunity of the sacred places. The Siccardi Bills were passed on April 8, 1850. A few months later the Minister of Agriculture and Commerce Count Pietro Derossi di Santarosa who supported the Bills was very ill and was at the point of death. He requested the sacraments but was denied. On September 28, 1850 the archbishop was accused of abusing his religious powers; he was arrested and sent into exile to Lyons. In 1855 "Law of the Convent" or the Rattazzi Law was passed which suppressed the religious corporations and monasteries and confiscated their properties. Don Bosco tried to negotiate between the Church-state. In 1858 the Government and the Church asked Don Bosco to act as an intermediary between Prime Minister Camillo Cavour and the Church. Don Bosco reported everything to the Pope and to the Cardinal Antonelli, Secretary of State to Pius IX. He promised Delegate Tortone that he would visit the Prime Minister again and explain to him the position of the Holy See. Cavour died suddenly on June 6, 1861 His successor Baron Bettino Ricasoli followed his ideas. The Archbishop died in exile in 1862 and the Archbishop Di Netro was appointed in his place. In 1859 the Holy Father asked Don Bosco to deliver to the King Victor Emanuel in strictest

confidence a letter in his own hand. King Emanuel had little power in the government.

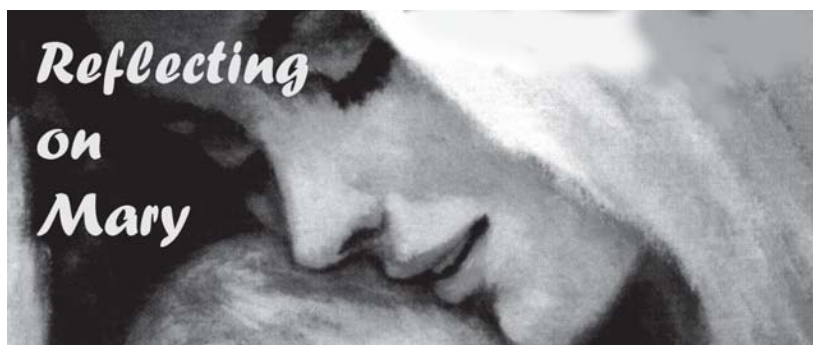
Territorially, Italy was not completely united. The north remained under Austria and the Pope held Rome and the surrounding territory (Latinum). This created difficulties for the unification of Italy. Don Bosco realized the crises and wanted to help the Church through his friends in the government. In 1865 Don Bosco was invited to a conference by Mr. Veglio who worked in the government in Giovanni Lanza's Ministry of Interior to discuss the issue on vacant seats in the Church. On December 1, 1866 the Italian government sent its representative in the person of Professor Michelangelo Tonello to Pope Pius IX and the Prime Minister requested Don Bosco to meet him in Rome. Don Bosco sent 13 names including Canon Gastaldi to Tonello and on February 9, 1867 Cardinal Antonelli handed the list of 23 possible candidates to the Pope. On February 22, 1867 Pope Pius IX held a secret consistory and announced 17 Episcopal nominations for the various regions of Italy.

The then Prime Minister Lanza introduced a Bill "The Law of Guarantees" which was approved in the Senate on May 2, 1871. This Bill proposed a free Church in a free state. It also underlined the prerogatives of the Supreme Pontiff and the relationship of the State with the Holy See. The Prime Minister also declared the transfer of the capital from Florence to Rome. The Pope was offered an annual sum of 3,250.000 lire. Pope Pius IX

condemned this Bill by his encyclical "Ubi nos" on May 15 1871 and refused to take the money saying that they had stolen it from the Pope. Following the occupation of Rome in 1871 and the total rejection of the Law of Guarantee by the Pope there was much tension, fear and uncertainty. It was during this time that Don Bosco was working hard to obtain the Royal Exequatur for the Bishops and their rightful Temporalities. The government granted the decree on the "Exequatur" signed by the king on February 25, 1872

On May 21, 1872 Don Bosco wrote to Prime Minister Lanza asking him to move the business on the "Temporalities." Prime Minister Lanza invited Don Bosco to discuss the issue of "Temporalities" On July 16, 1873 the new Prime Minister Minghetti assured Don Bosco that he would attend to the matter and get back to him. Don Bosco approached Minister of Justice Vigliani. By March 1874 negotiations for the bishops' temporalities had come to an end. The Decree granting "Exequatur" and Temporalities was signed by the king on May 15, 1874.

Don Bosco lived and worked in those historic years of change, he was aware of the situation in the Church and in the state. He was a man of faith and man of the Church who voluntarily offered his services for the Church. He was not a political man but he worked to bring about the negotiation between the Church and the State. Don Bosco's mediation made a good contribution to solve the crises in the Church and the State. □



MARY, THE GIRL FROM NAZARETH

by Ilario Spera, SDB

During a pilgrimage I made to the Holy Land, I found myself with some friends at the Basilica of Nazareth reflecting and contemplating on the mystery of God who made his home in Mary, that *young girl from Nazareth*.

On leaving the Basilica, still wrapped in contemplation of Mary, we made our way through the town, looking into the faces of many young Jewesses, trying to reconstruct in some fictional way the features of that *girl from Nazareth*. My curiosity led me away from the group and I found myself staring into the faces of every young girl I saw, thinking that I might - if I rearranged her features - be able to re-construct - in some vague way - the features of her Son Jesus.

I believe that Mary's presence - in those years - together with Jesus and Joseph must have created in Nazareth an atmosphere of sweetness and warmth because from the moment of her *fiat* everything must have been imbued with a divine aura. A well-known saying attests that wherever God treads even the desert blooms and the air is filled

with perfume.

She lived a simple life, seemingly uneventful in that unknown village of Nazareth. The Gospels do not recount any extraordinary events in her daily life. She was simply the wife of Joseph the carpenter.

What would certainly have struck anyone would have been how this family was always attentive to the needs of others and whose home always exuded an atmosphere of tremendous peace and serenity.

Mary welcomed the message of the angel in her heart and body and the Word of God while her womb became the cradle of the universe.

The prompt and total "*yes*" of the *young girl from Nazareth* encompassed her entire present and future life. She was ready to begin that great adventure which would give humankind the opportunity to contemplate in His Son, the Father's face.

In the silence of a deep faith, in the intimacy of a secret love, the Word of God, spoken from all eternity took on a human face to become the Son of Man.



In her thoughts Mary immediately strove to fathom the mind of God by adapting her rhythms to that of her Host. She modified her behaviour to match the task to which she had committed herself for the rest of her life.

God's fantastic ways surprise us at every stage in the Bible. At the beginning of the history of the Covenant in the Old Testament God summoned Abraham who was 75 years old.

To begin the New and definitive history of Salvation, in the fullness of time, God called Mary, *a girl from Nazareth*.

We notice that these two figures totally abandon themselves to God. The "*here I am*" that Abraham pronounced very early in his adventure finds an echo in Mary's "*here I am*" pronounced in a very definitive way.

Blessed John Paul II used a beautiful expression to define Mary, he called her "The believer" because she abandoned herself to God and trusted him completely. She placed neither herself nor her heart or her mind at the centre of

her existence but only whatever God would show her through the unfolding of the everyday events of her life!

For her, they would be silent acts of faith: believing in a virginal motherhood, in the divinity of her Son and the passion and death of the Lord; she would always believe!

It can be said that the pinnacle of her faith, the fullness of time for her was accomplished before the coming of Christ.

The faith of the patriarchs and prophets needed a fulfilment. This happened in Mary because she became the culmination and termination of all the imperfect faith of the past centuries.

"It is precisely Mary's faith which marks the beginning of the new and eternal covenant of God with man in Jesus Christ; this heroic faith of hers "precedes" the apostolic witness of the Church, and ever remains in the Church's heart hidden like a special heritage of God's revelation." (RM n. 27)¹

On the cross and at the tomb of the Lord we know well – that everyone's faith and hope vanished, except one, that most silent and most reverent one: Mary.

She fully accepted the mystery and what she did not understand she "kept" them in her heart in the full knowledge that they did make sense.

In Mary, *the girl from Nazareth*, faith was expressed in her prompt service to Elizabeth. With Jesus in her heart she could not tarry and hesitate. She needed to go where her faith led her to express itself in charity as St. Paul says.

"In those days Mary set out and travelled to the hill country going in haste to a town of Judah" (Lk 1:39ss).

Here is a great suggestion. The Gospel tells us that the way in which Mary set out was with a sense of concern, i.e. briskly and decisively... Like all youngsters, Mary believes in life, in loving life, in defending and guarding it. She travelled alone, with her own precious secret. She comes across to us as a young girl with an extraordinary dynamism and spirit of adventure.

"Mary of Nazareth," Pope Paul VI wrote in **Marialis cultus**, *"while being totally devoted to the Lord was far from being a timidly submissive woman ..."*

In the face of this amazing creature one cannot remain indifferent.

Churches and museums are full of masterpieces of her, a woman extraordinarily expressive and fully human. One is always enchanted by her beauty that comes from within her being and which radiates throughout her entire person.

I found, reading the book, *Thank you Jesus*, of the convert Magdi Allan, that even the Qur'an has extremely and truly delicate pages concerning the mother of Jesus. The author narrates that as in Christianity Islam too shares the mystery of Mary's virginity. In the Qur'an there is a chapter entitled the *Sura of Mary* dedicated to her, but overall her name appears there forty times, directly quoted 16 times, while in 23 cases it talks about "Jesus son of Mary" or the "Messiah son of Mary."

The Franciscan Julius Basetti-Sani, in his book **Mary and Jesus**

the son of Mary in the Qur'an, writes enthusiastically: *"For Fourteen centuries, based on the texts of the Qur'an extolled the Blessed Virgin Mary; even Muslim generations have called her blessed! Mary is such a strong link that binds Christians and Muslims because in the Qur'an she is the model of the believing soul who completely and always abandons herself to the Lord and generously accomplishes His divine will. For everyone, Christians and Muslims, she is the privileged model for those who want to seek God."*

Will she be the powerful Mediatrix to reunify the humankind in the sight of the God of Jesus? I am convinced that the girl from Nazareth, by her graceful beauty and her maternity will be able to captivate any person capable of wonder and awe.

From the Cross, Jesus gave her as a mother to every person coming into this world.

If Mary enters our lives she will tell Jesus about our real problems.

Be watchful as you were at Cana so that the *wine of joy* at the feast of our lives never runs out.

The only danger is that we get distracted and do not take the time to ponder on this incredible reality but we move away from her complaining that our lives are only sad experiences of loneliness. She is the Mother who will give back to us, through her Son, the hope and the certainty that God loves humankind and seeks always to welcome us at the threshold of his house. □

¹RM: *Redemptoris Mater*

LEBANON

The image of the small cedar tree planted in a garden by Benedict XVI together with President Michel Sleiman will live on among the most vivid symbols of this courageous journey – in a difficult and dramatic context – of the man in white (*l'homme en blanc*) who encouraged all the Lebanese not to be afraid, as the title on the front page of the daily *L'Orient Le Jour* said. And it was the Pope himself who mentioned the symbol at the beginning of the discourse he gave at the Presidential Palace of Baabda. The Pope was welcomed here with Oriental dancing and music and was showered with bouquets and rice, while from small braziers incense rose like prayers.

Together with Maronite Patriarch Béchara Boutros Raï he had a long conversation in particular with the four main Muslim religious leaders of Lebanon. Pope Benedict wished to give each one of them a copy in Arabic of *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente*. The document – which resulted from the Special Assembly of the Synod for the region and which the Pope himself described as the Road Map for the next few years – reads “A Middle East without Christians, or with only a few Christians, would no longer be the Middle East, since Christians, together with other believers, are part of the distinctive identity of the region”.

This means that “all are responsible before God for one another”. And the document – that Benedict XVI signed as the first act of his journey, surrounded by the Eastern-rite Patriarchs on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross

– was echoed by the Papal Discourse, which forcefully upheld the peaceful coexistence of Christians and Muslims. This very same feast, which came into being in the East in the last years of Constantine’s long reign, gave the Pope the key to interpreting the document. The connection between Christ’s death and his Resurrection, in fact, obliges Christians to become witnesses of brotherhood with practical actions, similar to the emperor’s historic decision to grant religious freedom.

“If we want peace, let us defend life!” the Pope exclaimed forcefully. And he straight away reminded those present that evil is not nameless and that the devil always seeks an ally in man; even in “those wars so full of futility and horror”, which must be opposed. Education, he repeated, in religious freedom that “has a social and political dimension which is indispensable for peace!”; so that it will grow, like the little cedar which is the symbol of Lebanon. (*L'OR*)

ROME

Catholic media network Aleteia.org has launched a website to present a collection of the “best print and multimedia content” from Catholic organizations across the globe.

Aleteia.org, which is a project of the Foundation for Evangelization through the Media, aims to promote a

“global conversation on faith, life and society for all ‘truth-seekers’” through the Internet.

Launching in English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian and Arabic, Aletea is just one part of the foundation’s response to the Pope’s call to bring the New Evangelization into the digital world.

“The website acts as a platform for all things Catholic, featuring print, video, radio and news from partners worldwide.

“We want only to serve, we are not producers,” Colina explained in a Sept. 20, 2012 interview with CNA. “We’re the servants of the institutions and our vocation is to serve.”

Although each source on their site has its own “identity” and “diversity,” Aletea will be “unifying their effort” to spread the message of the Gospel.

CEO Andrea Salvati, is an Italian who has spent the past six years on Google Italy’s leadership team. “This is a huge opportunity for me to be in my job and helping this company to become an online giant,” he said, “but above all” it offers him a chance to “stay close to my values.” He officially joins the team in January, Salvati began cooperating with the site in October 2012.

Salvati hopes the launch of Aletea will provide a greater opportunity for Catholic content to “be shown to many more people” than before.

Aletea is currently made up of a team of 45 people around the world who serve as writers, translators, social media managers and digital experts with offices in Rome, Paris and Washington, D.C (CNA)



KHAZAKHSTAN

On Sept. 16, 2012 The Cathedral of Our Lady of Fatima was consecrated in the city of Karaganda in Kazakhstan on Sunday, marking the rise of Christianity in a region. Bishop Janusz Kaleta of Karaganda voiced “great joy for a real cathedral.” He told Fides news agency that the large church will be “a place of prayer and a visible sign to attract new faithful to the Christian faith.”

Cardinal Angelo Sodano, the dean of the College of Cardinals, served as Pope Benedict XVI’s legate to the ceremony. He concelebrated the dedication Mass of the gothic-style church with Bishop Kaleta and others. Over 1,500 attended the event, including Catholic faithful, Orthodox Christian leaders, Muslim leaders, and local civil authorities.

Fr. Piotr Pytlowany, rector of the Diocese of Karaganda’s seminary, said the achievement is “the fruits of the martyrs and the suffering that Christians lived in the past in these lands.”

“We entrust the Catholic community in Kazakhstan, and in all the countries of the former Soviet Union, to the special protection of the Virgin of Fatima, who has already worked miracles,” he said. □

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.*

My sincere and heartfelt gratitude for the blessings and favours received through praying the three HAIL MARYS. Mother Mary please continue to intercede always for me and my family.

Barreto John - Goa

Thank you Mamma Mary for curing the irritation in my eye and all the graces received. Please continue to keep your mantle over our family.

Rini Aranha, Mumbai

While returning home from school in the school van on 5th September 2012, a bus hit the van. The glass of the window broke into pieces and spread on all of us in the bus. It was the protection of Mother Mary and St. Christopher that none of us was injured and miraculously saved. It was my daily practice to pray the three Hail Marys every night. Now my faith in Mother Mary has been strengthened all the more.

Taivishi Shaw, Guwahati

Thank you O Holy Trinity, Mother Mary and Don Bosco for all the graces and favours bestowed on our family through praying the Hail Mary.

Lolita and Mathew Moraes, Melbourne, Australia

My sincere and heartfelt gratitude for the blessings and favours received through praying the three Hail Marys. Mother Mary please continue to intercede always for me and my family.

Barreto John, Goa

Many thanks to Mother Mary for favours granted.

Mrs. J. Mascarenhas, Mumbai

I have received numerous favours through faithfully praying the 3 Hail Marys. So many times my family and I were in trouble but the 3 Hail Marys helped us at all times to get out of trouble. We apologise for delaying our acknowledgement of all these favours. Our sincere and heartfelt gratitude for the many blessings and favours through the recitation of the 3 Hail Marys. Mother Mary please continue to intercede for our family.

M & D. D'Costa, Goa

My sincere thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mother Mary for all the favours received and for solving my daughter's problems in New Zealand.

A.T. Pinto, Mumbai

LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

I thank the Lord Jesus and His most loving Mother Mary for answering my prayers and for gifting me my life back once more. I thank them for healing me completely and watching over me and for turning my sorrow into joy, my tears to laughter.

Melanie Trinidad, Goa

It was 1st Saturday of the month and 5th day the novena in honour of Our Lady's Nativity. I had told my wife to write an intercession for Evening Mass and I left for school. Around 11.30 am I received a call from a known person telling me about my wife and sister-in-law, they had met with an accident and that something serious might have happened. I rush to the spot but they had been taken to the hospital, thanks to Blessed Mother. By the help and grace of Our Mother they were both saved except for some small bruises. I am grateful to Our Lady for protecting her children.

Rajendra Dushing

Thank you dear Lord Jesus of Divine Mercy and Our Lady for blessing of my dear mother, Maria Bernardete to pass from this world in a state of grace. She was a devout Catholic and always prayed in time of suffering. We were able to care for her at home and have the priest to give her the last sacraments. In the weeks before her passing, she suffered greatly, but never faltered in her prayer, reciting the Holy Rosary constantly. In her dying moments her last word was 'Jesus'. For this great grace dear Lord, I thank you.

Fatima de Abreu UK

My most grateful thanks to the Holy Spirit and our Blessed Mother Mary for healing the cyst which my daughter had on her head for many years. She took no medication and it was only through prayers that she has been healed. Also, my grateful thanks for my friend's successful operation of the tumour in her throat which was found to be benign.

Mrs A deSouza, Australia

THEY ARE GRATEFUL TO OUR LADY AND DON BOSCO

My sincere thanks to Madonna, Don Bosco and all the angels and saints especially the departed souls of my dear parents who heard our prayers. Through their intercession, my younger sister, Rosa Mystica Mawlong had passed her Ph.D after many years of struggle.

Virginia Mawlong, Shillong

Our sincere thanks to Our Blessed Mother, Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for the many blessings bestowed on us, we have been blessed with good health, peace and the gifts of the births of our two grandchildren. We are grateful for all the other blessings received.

Patrick and Jean Sequiera, Australia

My mother aged 70 was suddenly very sick and she was hospitalized. I depended on God's mercy. On receiving the anointing of the sick and Holy Communion she was on her way to recovery. My belated but sincere thanks to almighty God, Our Blessed Mother, St. John Bosco and all the saints for protecting and blessing our family always.

M. Crasto,

Mumbai

THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



Our sincere thanks to Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio, in spite of complications we had a safe delivery and I have been blessed with a healthy baby boy, Felix. *Castro, Larita Sequeira Netty Sequiera, Goa*

My sincere thanks to Our Lady, Don Bosco and Domnic Savio for saving me from being robbed when I came to Mumbai and for supplying all my needs and for my elder brother's phone calls of concern.

M. Dodd, Pune

Our sincere thanks to Our Lady and Dominic Savio for granting my baby a new lease of life when the doctor had given her only 24 hours to live. Thanks too because

my daughter too is well.

Ida

My sincere thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for answering my prayers and for the favours received. Thank you dear Jesus and Mother Mary for your love and protection over me and my loved ones. I am so sorry for the delay.

C. Machado, Goa My sincere thanks to the Infant Jesus, Mother Mary and Dominic Savio for giving my daughter a benign biopsy report for her tumour deep inside her left shoulder region and for the successful surgery thereafter.

Smt. K. Angela Morsa, Adilabad, AP

Our sincere thanks to Mother Mary and St. Dominic Savio for a normal and safe delivery of a baby boy after 5 years of marriage.

Succorine and Anthony D'Souza, Nallasopara

My heart thanks to Our Lady, St. Dominic Savio and all the saints for the countless favours received and blessings bestowed to my family through the faithful recitation of the three Hail Marys. Mother Mary continue to intercede for my family and protect us always.

M. Marques, Mumbai

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

JANUARY 2013

Holy Father's General Intention: *That in this Year of Faith Christians may deepen their knowledge of the mystery of Christ and witness joyfully to the gift of faith in him.*

Missionary Intention: *That the Christian communities of the Middle East, often discriminated against, may receive from the Holy Spirit the strength of fidelity and perseverance.*

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MARY WAS THERE

My eight-month-old daughter got hold of a clothes clip and put it into her mouth. When I noticed the clip missing I immediately put my finger into her mouth and retrieved the clothes clip. I had not noticed that the spring was not with the clip. When I became aware of that I quickly forced her mouth open and found that the spring had lodged itself on her tongue. I know it was truly Our Lady who had protected my child from something that could have been very dangerous. Thank you Sweet Jesus and Mother Mary for being there and keeping my baby safe.

Bianca D'Costa

Don Bosco's Madonna, has developed to its present form from a folder published in 1937, by late Fr Aurelius Maschio, on behalf of the Salesians of Don Bosco, Bombay. The magazine is sent to all who ask for it, even though there is a fixed subscription (*Rs 200/- India & Rs 400/- Airmail*). We trust in the generosity of our readers/benefactors. Whatever you send us will help cover the expenses of printing and mailing; the surplus if any, is devoted to the support of orphans and poor boys in our schools and apostolic centres.

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

You can help by establishing a Perpetual Burse with:

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

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

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

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Please address all correspondence to:

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