

CONTENTS

From The Editor's Desk: <i>If God is with us.....</i>	3
Glimpses of Love: From Nazareth to Our Home - <i>Giampaolo Dianin.....</i>	4
Walking with the Church: Cobwebs: Strategies for Survival.....	6
Reasons to Believe - 7 - <i>Franco Molinari.....</i>	9
Time of the Spirit: Courage - <i>Carmen Laval.....</i>	10
New Signs of Hope: <i>St. Germaine Cousin</i> <i>Ian Pinto, sdb.....</i>	13
Lectio Divina: The Lord's Prayer - <i>Dinesh Vasava, sdb.....</i>	16
Quietspaces: To Move Aside So That Christ may Remain <i>Andrea Torielli.....</i>	18
Always May - <i>Pierluigi Menato.....</i>	20
Fioretti of Don Bosco - 67 - <i>Michele Molineris</i>	24
Reflecting on Mary: Our Lady of Mount Carmel - <i>A.B. Bosco.....</i>	27
Vocation Story: Fr. Michele Gentile Sarah Laporta.....	30
In a Cheerful Mood.....	33
Depicting Life - <i>Bruno Ferrero.....</i>	34



***May the venerable
intercession of the
glorious Virgin Mary
come to our aid,
we pray, O Lord,
so that, fortified
by her protection,
we may reach
the mountain which
is Christ.***

*(From the Opening Prayer of
the Feast of OL of Mount Carmel)*

From The Editor's Desk

IF GOD IS WITH US...

Many years ago I was listening to an exasperated professor of mine, in the seminary (no less) screaming: "What in God's name...." I wonder whether he realised what he was saying and with such emotion too. The fact is, so many of us bandy about 'God's' name very casually and don't bat an eyelid. It's as if there's nothing to it. Most certainly, the Gen Z and the millennials have heard it or watched it on TV, YouTube, commercials or Netflix and found it appropriate to insert into their day-to-day vocabulary to get an entry into the 'in crowd' because everyone's using it...('it' being the name of "God"). We learnt not to use the name of 'God' in our catechism class but that was then....and this is now....shouldn't we really take these 'expletives' involving God, seriously?

In a Western context that increasingly appears indifferent to religion, the name of 'God' resonates quite frequently. In the name of God, people act, defend themselves, make claims, and engage in conflicts. This narrative is as old as time. In the Bible, the chosen people felt empowered and claimed rights to the land based on a promise made by Yahweh. Today, some individuals feel they are part of a miraculous event because they have been spared, viewing themselves as architects of a divine plan to be realized with arrogance. In the name of God, anything can be justified. But which God are we referring to? The Christian God does not conform to our image and likeness. We cannot assign favour to Him for some while condemning others. Again, we find in the Bible the words of the prophet Isaiah: "The Lord of hosts will bless them: Blessed be the Egyptian, my people, the Assyrian, the work of my hands, and Israel, my inheritance" (Isaiah 19:24-25). God is the God of all.

When we read the Gospels closely, we realize that the portrayal of God revealed by Jesus significantly differs from the one often showcased today. If He has a preference, it is for sinners (as He said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick"), for the little ones (who are invited to "let the children come to me"), and for the peacemakers and the merciful, whom He calls 'blessed.'

Bringing up the divine and claiming it as one's ally does not do justice to its true nature. Even the Nazis inscribed "Gott mit uns" (God with us) on their belt buckles, a motto that has persisted through the centuries, from the book of Judith to the Roman Empire and into modern times. Can we still tolerate this? It is a form of populism, exploiting religion to serve one's own interests. Politicians often swear on the Bible, seek blessings, and present themselves as messengers of the divine will. However, wielding the holy book alongside a sword does not reflect genuine religiosity. This represents the same old theocracy that continues to exist in various countries around the world.

The one who "makes his sun rise on the good and the bad" does not engage in human disputes by taking sides. Instead, he calls us to act in his name for the benefit of all, not just for a select group.

Fr. Ian Doulton, sdb

FROM NAZARETH...TO OUR HOME!

by Bishop Giampaolo Dianin

Between what started at Nazareth and Easter lies the everyday life of Mary, as well as the daily experiences of every family, filled with choices, encounters, joys, unexpected events, and difficulties.

Marian devotion flavours every family in some way or other; the family Rosary, a novena to Our Lady at a Shrine somewhere near you and somehow, she is featured in the daily life of our regular, day-to-day families through the prayer of the rosary. Mary is a woman, a wife, and a mother; this was why St. John Paul II included in the Marian litanies the invocation of her as *Queen of the Family*.

St. Thérèse wrote, "One should not speak about Mary in ways that are far-fetched or that one does not truly understand. For a sermon on the Holy Virgin to resonate with me and to be beneficial, I must

see her real life, not a life that is merely imagined. It is essential to portray her as both unapproachable and imitable, highlighting her virtues and acknowledging that she lived by faith just as we do." (*Ultimi colloqui*, Piemme, 1997, 183-184).

Mary is a young woman who was catapulted into salvation history from a simple, hidden life in her village. God did not spare her from the challenges of life; she experienced the nine months of pregnancy and everything that every man and woman feels, lives, and suffers on this earth.

The stages of her life can accom-

pany and support the journey of every married couple during our everyday life, beginning with the 'Here I am' that she uses to embrace God's call to be Joseph's bride and Jesus' mother. Mary's 'Here I am' reflects the 'Here I am' of every vocation, including that of a married couple on their wedding day. This affirmation opened the door to a new existence; from that moment on, Mary's entire life, like that of the bride and groom, becomes a response to that initial 'yes.' It sets off a chain of events that would require her to reaffirm that 'yes' countless times.

The encounter with her cousin Elizabeth showed us two women carrying precious children. They both recognized that life was a gift that did not belong to them; instead, those children are God's, and they serve as humble instruments in His hands.

I remember some amusing jokes from the former Patriarch of Venice, Luciani, who, while reflecting on the many Marian shrines in the Veneto region, said, "I would like there to be a shrine to Our Lady of plates, bowls, nappies, brooms..." The little St. Thérèse was thinking about this, along with the great theme of Mary's faith.

Throughout the Gospels, we often see Mary, who observes her son and his life, "keeping all these things and pondering them in her heart." The essence of Mary's spirituality lay in the "Shema," the act of obediently "listening" to the One God, so that He could speak to His handmaid and accomplish His works through her. This also reflects the relationship between two spouses as they navigate the mystery of their

*Mary remains
an inspiration, guide,
a model for the journey
of every marriage!
And of every family*

children. To keep things in one's heart is an expression of faith, as not everything is always clear, and one often must accept the reality of not understanding everything.

The encounter between Mary and Simeon represented the intersection of human hope, embodied by the holy Simeon, and the hope of humanity, embodied by Jesus. This encounter was marked by both joy and sorrow: joy was reflected in Simeon's words about salvation, the light of the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel; sorrow was symbolized by the sword that pierced Mary's heart.

Every family's story includes moments of drama and martyrdom, especially when life doesn't unfold as envisioned and plans must be adapted to unexpected circumstances.

Between the beginning of Nazareth and Easter lies Mary's daily life and the everyday experiences of all families. This range of experiences includes feelings of confusion when caring for children, as illustrated by the moment Jesus was lost and later found, to the quiet care she showed him without invading his life or choices, all while seeking a bond that is new and never taken for granted.

Mary, as a bride, mother, and disciple, embodies the characteristics of every Christian family, despite the significant differences between her unique family and our own. □



COBWEBS: STRATEGIES FOR SURVIVAL

Elide Siviero

While we cannot always control events, everyone can choose how to respond. If we are uncertain about what to do, here is one solution.

I read something incredible: after heavy rain and flooding in the countryside, the fields in the lowlands were covered in giant cobwebs. Disturbing photos began circulating, showing a prominent white veil stretching between small hamlets, with additional reports coming from nearby farmsteads and other areas bordering a particular region that seemed to have been less populated by human habitation. This unusual sight set social media ablaze, as many claimed that such a phenomenon had never been witnessed in these parts before. However, some argued that it is a typical occurrence that has been happening for centuries after long periods of rain, just without the benefit of social media to spread the news.

Some people even recounted finding their bicycles in the countryside covered in sticky webs, while others shared photos of their dogs wrapped in the white strands after their usual walks along the riverbanks.

In a horror movie scenario, the sight of white webs might be unsettling, but for entomologists, they represent the remarkable resilience of spiders. To avoid drowning, these arachnids utilize their greatest skill: weaving webs that serve as a lifeline, allowing them to climb higher and escape the dangers of the rising water. According to experts, this strategy is employed by spider species that live on the ground when the soil remains saturated for extended periods. In such situations, these



spiders seek refuge in elevated areas, creating webs that completely envelop trees, bushes, and blades of grass.

While I don't have a particular fondness for spiders—I find them somewhat repulsive, and the idea of getting caught in a spider web is quite disturbing—I find this behaviour thought-provoking. We cannot always control the events in our lives; we cannot stop the rain, halt the wind, or manipulate the length of our days. However, each of us can choose how to respond to what happens around us. Like the little spiders from that countryside, we should leverage our skills to avoid being overwhelmed by worries and anxieties. And when we don't know what to do, we simply need to rise above it all.

High up on a mountain, God called Moses from the burning bush (cf. Ex 3:1) and gave the Law to His people (cf. Ex 19). According to the Gospel of Matthew, the inaugural discourse of the Beatitudes (cf. Mt 5:1) and the appearances of the Risen One (cf. Mt

28:16) both took place on a mountain. The Transfiguration of the Lord also occurred on a hill (cf. Mt 17:1-9), and most importantly, on Calvary, or Golgotha, Christ was crucified (cf. Mt 27:33). Every ascent to a hill invites us to climb, as it transforms the landscape below into a broad panorama, altering our perspective.

Throughout Scripture, we find an invitation to look beyond our comfortable surroundings and the flat horizon. The book of the prophet Hosea expresses a lament from God: "My people are hard to convert; called to look up, no one knows how to lift his eyes" (Hosea 11:7). It is God Himself who encourages us not to keep our gaze fixed on the ground, but to at least raise our eyes in order to convert our hearts.

We are urged to weave webs of prayer that can lift us beyond the mire where our dreams become stuck, helping us rise above danger, fear, and anguish. In doing so, we can feel sheltered and come to understand that it is God who keeps us safe—not because everything will go perfectly, but because above the floods of our existence, He prepares nets of salvation. These webs of trust consist of thin yet strong threads that can elevate us from life's pitfalls, no matter where they may be. □

REASONS TO BELIEVE - 7

by Franco Molinari

Did you know that the sun exists?

Statistics indicate that 80 percent of astronomers believe in God or at least acknowledge the infinite mystery that the universe represents, vast in both space and time. The founders of modern astronomy, whether Catholic or Protestant, had no qualms about this belief.

Newton stated, "This admirable order, which we discern in the heavens, can only be the work of an omnipotent and omniscient being." Kepler expanded on this idea by saying, "By discovering the mysteries of heaven, man contemplates the thoughts of God." Even Voltaire, who ridiculed Catholicism as a source of intolerance, held a greater disdain for atheists, famously declaring, "It is not logical to use a clock and deny the watchmaker."

In a similar vein, the Masonic concept of the Great Architect of the Universe can be illustrated by Garibaldi's statement: "A factory reveals the architect, a machine reveals the mechanic, and the world, with the harmony of its laws, reveals the Great

Regulator." Can astronomy provide scientific proof of the Transcendent? No. While science acknowledges that there is something "beyond" the phenomena, it cannot confirm it either; such matters lie outside its purview.

A prominent scientist, Jesuit George V. Coyne, director of the Vatican Observatory, addressed the core of this issue. He stated: "To those who engage in my field, the world appears orderly yet chaotic, structured but at times confusing. God reveals Himself while simultaneously remaining



Fr George V. Coyne sj



hidden amidst shadows and enigmas. As St. Paul mentions, the Creator gives hints of His existence as if seen in a mirror, leaving traces behind. If God is the supreme mystery, then His presence is also shrouded in mystery. When an astronomer admits his ignorance, it is not an act of false humility but a statement of truth. Behind this mystery, one senses the call of God" (article by V. Messori in *Jesus*, August 1986).

But what lies beyond? Writer Maurice Lelong offered an intriguing reflection, summed up in the question: "Do you know that there is sunshine?"

In the countryside, in a long, windowless shed, thousands of chicks live and grow rapidly, fattening through ultra-modern scientific methods. The constant, artificial electric light is more effective than the sun's varying rays. As a result, these birds move from their artificial environment directly to the rotisserie without

ever seeing sunlight.

Those outside the shed want to shout, "Do you realize that there is not just artificial light, but also the sun?"

The chickens do not believe in the sun because they have never experienced it. They are like materialists who deny the existence of God simply because they have never seen Him.

God and my aorta

The Egyptians were certainly mistaken when they identified God with the sun. However, light is undoubtedly one of the most relevant images of divinity. The Quran states: "Light is closer to us than our aorta." Even earlier, St. Augustine wrote that God is nearer to us and more internal than we realize.

The Egyptian hymn to the sun is beautiful: "Magnificent and multi-coloured, you create light with your divine rays. The earth



The Egyptian Sun God Ra

is blind when you disappear, O shining sun, radiant brilliance. You traverse the heavens, radiant light of exquisite splendour. Each morning, you awaken in beauty, lofty and inaccessible, and you open the bud of your light upon the ocean."

The sun certainly did not emerge from the laboratories in Moscow nor from the work of Einstein, who believed in God. The solar system, which is just a tiny part of the infinite universe, cannot be explained without acknowledging the divine Architect.

I may doubt my fragile and provisional existence, but I cannot doubt the great Adjuster of the harmony of the infinite worlds. Denying this would be akin to denying the existence of Dante Alighieri and claiming that the Divine Comedy was written by an ape randomly pressing keys on a typewriter. While one case may be

plausible, two cases give pause for thought. An infinite number of cases borders on the absurd.

If God exists, then why is there so much darkness and despair in hospitals, prisons, and nursing homes? My response is that the existence of a dark cave does not negate the existence of the sun. In this life, there are certain dark areas that do not receive light. However, there is an eternity to redeem our earthly experiences. Teresa of Avila, a mystic from the Counter-Reformation, expressed it well when she said, "This earth is like a bad hotel, in which we spend one night and then continue our journey."

Furthermore, the prophet Isaiah teaches us: "If you share your bread with the hungry and welcome the poor into your home, if you clothe the naked, your darkness will be turned into light, and your night will become like the noon day." □

FAITH

When shadows come and darkness falls,
When you have no strength, all hope seems lost.
In depths of doubt, where fears abide,
Faith stands tall, a steadfast guide
In moments of despair and woe,
And tears of sorrow freely flow,
When breath seems gone under pain's great weight.
Faith whispers hope to hearts that break.
Faith is the evidence of things not seen
Lifting your spirit as if on eagle's wings
It can help you through the darkest night.
When you walk by faith and not by sight.
So, let's hold fast to faith each day.
In every trial, in every way,
For when we trust, we find God's grace,
And the peace that comes from Love's embrace.

COURAGE

Courage is often misunderstood, yet it is a fundamental virtue in building a good and resilient character.

The courage to accept oneself and reality

For the great theologian Romano Guardini, courage means accepting one's existence. It involves embracing life in its entirety as it is, trusting that within it lies divine direction.

Here's an interesting story about a tourist visiting Italy who comes across a construction site where men are at work. The tourist approaches a bricklayer and asks him, "What do you do?" The bricklayer replies, "I lay bricks."

The tourist continues and sees another bricklayer doing the same job. He approaches him and asks, "What do you do?" The man replies, "I build a wall."

Finally, he sees yet another mason, working simply to the first two. The tourist asks him, "What do you do?" The third mason looks at him and replies, "I build a cathedral to give glory to God."

This story illustrates that no matter how repetitive a task or how daunting a challenge may be, the perspective we adopt can be transformative, making all the difference in our personal

experience.

Everything we did not choose

We all encounter circumstances in life that we did not choose or desire, which I will refer to as the "given" of life. This includes factors such as our place of birth, family, the era in which we live, as well as our body, personality, intelligence, abilities, qualities, limitations, and even handicaps. Additionally, the events that happen to us can significantly impact our lives, yet we lack control over them — such as illness, economic fluctuations, aging, and death. Essentially, this represents the "fate" of being human.

One response to this fate is to reject it, wishing that things were different. Almost all of us would prefer not to grow old, experience illness, or confront death. Some individuals may reject their culture, family, or home country, while others might despise their bodies or temperaments, suffering because of certain physical or psychological limitations.

This rejection is both understandable and valid, but it is crucial to recog-



nize that serenity, inner peace, and joy can only be achieved through accepting our reality. Embracing life as it is, with all its inevitable challenges and hardships, is essential for finding true contentment.

We cannot choose our parents, nor can we decide to exchange them for others or transform them into different people. Similarly, the family, country, and environment we are born into are not results of our choices.

The work of acceptance also extends to our own identity. Each of us possesses a unique combination of intelligence, sensitivity, innate temperament, and character that has been shaped by our upbringing. It is crucial to recognize and accept these qualities, just as we accept our physical appearance. Embracing life and our true selves fosters a sense of gratitude and becomes a source of happiness. It is akin to the act of breathing.

The courage to overcome internal and external enemies

We have internal enemies that we must defeat: anxiety, anguish, fear, and guilt. Most of the fears that arise within us are unrealistic and do not come true.

Life presents us with trials, persecutions, and unexpected difficulties that often catch us by surprise. While we might attempt to predict what will occur in our lives, reality is largely shaped by unforeseen events. In this vast sea of uncertainty, our boat may be tossed about by the waves. However, the virtue of courage turns us into resilient sailors, helping us remain steadfast in the face of fear and discouragement.

The courage to be indignant and challenge the evil in the world

Some people pretend that darkness does not exist, that everything is fine, and that human will is never blind. They ignore the dark forces that bring about death and suffering throughout history. However, a quick glance at history or today's newspapers reveals the nefarious deeds of which we are both victims and participants: wars, violence, slavery, and the oppression of those living in poverty. These are wounds that have never healed and continue to bleed.

The virtue of courage compels us to react and firmly say "no" to all of this – an unequivocal "no" to evil and everything that fosters indifference. We need someone to jolt us out of the comfort zone we have settled into, urging us to boldly repeat our "no" to wrongdoing and apathy. We must stand together and declare "no" to evil and indifference, while simultaneously affirming "yes" to the path that moves us forward.

The courage to be Christian

Courage is found in those who fulfil their duties even when they feel afraid. St. Thomas More, shortly before his death, wrote to his daughter: *"Even if I were to feel fear to the point of being overwhelmed, I would remember St. Peter, who began to sink into the lake due to little faith at the first gust of wind. I would do as he did: I would invoke Christ and ask for His help."*

True courage comes from putting oneself on the line, while we may feel fearful and stumble, we will still move forward. With God's grace, we will ultimately reach our goal, where we can breathe in a freer atmosphere. □

BL. PIER GIORGIO FRASSATI

July 4

Ian Pinto, sdb

Torinese Youngster

Pier Giorgio Frassati was born in the city of Turin, Italy on April 6, 1901. His father was the owner of the famous local newspaper, *La Stampa*. Under his management, the newspaper rose to national prominence and remains in print today! Pier's father was an agnostic, that is, a person who neither believes nor denies the existence of God. His mother, on the other hand, was Catholic, and she instilled in him Christian virtues that Pier lived out in an exemplary manner.

Both his parents were fairly in the spotlight and so Pier grew up in the public eye. His mother was a painter; she would put her work on display at exhibitions around Italy. At one of the exhibitions in Venice, King Victor Emmanuel III purchased some of her works. His father, besides being chief editor for the newspaper, also played an active role in politics. He served in the Senate for some time before becoming the Italian ambassador to Germany.

Despite being a city boy, Pier loved to be in nature. He would often go trekking in the mountains along with his friends. He loved to swim and was a fairly good athlete. He earned the nickname, "Terror" because of the kind of pranks he would pull. Though he enjoyed poking fun and getting laughs, he was careful not to hurt others' feelings. His sensitivity



was not lost on others who perceived that he had a heart of gold beneath his mischievous exterior.

It is interesting that Pier, who was an average student in school, failed a year, in what would have been his 8th or 9th grade. Perhaps, we had become too distracted by his adventures and games. His parents decided that he be sent to a boarding school run by the Jesuits.

His friends remember him for

his charming personality, athleticism and jovial nature. But above all, he is remembered for his kindness. Pier developed a sincere love for the poor. Turin was not an idyllic city by any stretch of the imagination. Poverty was on display everywhere. While there were many great institutes that were involved in uplifting the poor, including those of Joseph Cottolengo and Don Bosco, Pier was drawn to the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and the Dominicans. He joined the Third Order of the Dominicans in 1922 and nurtured a commitment to prayer, study, devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and to our Blessed Mother.

Social Worker

As a young boy, Pier manifested a great sense of concern for the poor and a desire to help them. On one occasion, someone rang the doorbell. The young Pier opened the door and found a poor mother begging for alms. Besides her was her little son who was barefoot. Spontaneously, Pier removed his footwear and gave it to the boy. On another occasion, a poor man came to the door. His father turned him away as he was drunk. Pier saw this and ran to his mother in tears. She consoled him and told him to go after the man and call him back while she prepared something for him to eat. When he was in college, he used part of his allowance to purchase a bed for a person suffering from tuberculosis, which was considered a fatal illness at the time and carried a social stigma. At another time, he paid for accommodation for a woman who was evicted from her home.

Pier was appalled by the social conditions and was especially critical of fascism, which had arisen in Italy with Mussolini as well as in neighbouring countries like Germany. He participated in demonstrations and was even arrested while protesting in Rome along with the Young Catholic Workers Congress. He felt that in order to bring about God's Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, prayer and good works were not enough. He would often repeat this phrase, which worked as a mantra for him: "Charity is not enough; we need social reform." Pier was convinced that if change had to be brought out in the world, he would have to be part of the solution.

He was inspired by Pope Leo XIII's encyclical on the dignity of labour titled, *Rerum Novarum* (1891) that he founded a newspaper called 'Momento' to promote the ideals put forth in the encyclical and propagate values that aligned with the Catholic faith. This encyclical is considered a foundational text for what we know today as Catholic Social Teaching. A popular compendium of it has been published as the DoCat. Pier, was quick to perceive the ground-breaking nature of the encyclical and immediately sprang into action to create a way for Catholics to get involved in social matters. In this regard, we can call him a front-runner. It is commendable that a young person like Pier, who was merely in his late teens, could display such conviction and initiative.

In 1918, Pier joined the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. He spent

a lot of time helping the poor and less fortunate. In the same year, he began his college studies. He opted to study mining engineering so that he could, in his own words, "serve Christ better among the miners." When he graduated, his father offered to gift him either a car or a large sum of money to start a business. Pier chose the latter and used it to help the poor. On one of his visits with the SSVP, he came across a family of three children whose mother, a widow, was ill. Pier took it upon himself to help this family financially, from the money he had, as well as with other things they needed help with.

Painful End

On June 30, 1925, Pier had gone along with friends for an adventure near the river Po. While he was rowing a boat, he began to complain of back pain. The boys' adventure had to be cut short as the very next day, Pier developed a high fever and complained of severe headache. Unfortunately, his maternal grandmother passed away that very day and Pier, not wishing to cause any additional fuss, suffered silently. The following day he discovered that he could not get up from the bed. The doctor diagnosed him with poliomyelitis commonly known as polio.

On account of the illness, Pier suffered great pain and would become exhausted easily. His health began to deteriorate as he struggled to sleep. He requested for a shot of morphine to ease the pain and help him sleep but both, his mother and the doctor felt that it was not advisable. Hence, Pier re-

mained without relief but he never complained. On July 4, Pier breathed his last. He was 24 years old.

When the cortege left his residence for the Church, his family was shocked to find the streets full of people who wished to pay their respects. Reports say that thousands of mourners, mostly people Pier had helped, came to solemnize his funeral. He was buried at the Frassati plot at Pollone Cemetery. His remains were later transferred to the Turin Cathedral in 1981 after he was declared Servant of God. When his remains were exhumed they were found to be incorrupt. He was beatified in 1990 by Pope John Paul II and was declared the patron of youth. At his beatification, the Pope gave him the title, "Man of the Beatitudes" because of his commitment to working for the Kingdom of God.

Pier will be canonized during the Jubilee of Youth on August 3, 2025. His life is a powerful testimony of hope. Pope John Paul II described his influence in these words, "I wanted to pay homage to a young man who was able to witness to Christ with singular effectiveness in this century of ours. When I was a young man, I too, felt the beneficial influence of his example and, as a student, I was impressed by the force of his testimony." Pier's life reminds us that we are called to be Good Samaritans; it is not enough for us to pray for the poor – we have to concretely reach out to them. It is not enough that we pray for peace – we have to concretely become peacemakers. The world needs kindness but what it needs more is reform. □



THE LORD'S PRAYER

by Dinesh Vasava, sdb

In this passage, (Luke 11:1-13) the disciples ask Jesus to teach them to pray. He responds by giving them the Lord's Prayer as a model and emphasizes the importance of persistence in prayer. Jesus assures them that God, like a loving father, will respond to their requests whenever they are in need.

Meditation:

The theme of prayer is central to the Liturgy of the Word this Sunday, and the disciples' question, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Lk 11:1), invites us to reflect on how we celebrate this Eucharist. Jesus responds with a brief teaching divided into three parts: the Lord's Prayer (vv. 2-4), a parable (vv. 5-8), and a teaching on the efficacy of prayer (vv. 9-13). While the first and third parts resonate with the synoptic tradition, the parable is unique to Luke, offering insight into God's nature and our relationship with Him.

The parable features three friends: one arrives at another's



house at night, tired and in need of help. Instead of trying to solve his problem alone, he seeks assistance from a third friend, confident that he will receive support regardless of the hour. This challenges us to consider our own will-

ingness to reach out to others in need.

The true focus is on the friend who is disturbed at night: will he help or not? Jesus stresses that the friend will respond, motivated by friendship and the boldness of the request. This man's prayer is characterized by persistence and courage, showing that genuine friendship allows for forthrightness in our requests.

Ultimately, we can only pray with such confidence when we recognize God as our friend. The way we approach prayer is transformed by our relationship with Him. In summary, today's reading highlights three key points about prayer and our connection with God and one another.

- **The Lord's Prayer:** This prayer encapsulates the essence of Christian prayer, expressing our relationship with God, our needs, and our desire for His will to be done in our day today's activities and life.

- **Persistence in Prayer:** Jesus encourages His followers to be persistent in their prayers, likening God to a father who desires to give good gifts to His children in their need and above when they call him.

- **God as a Loving Father:** The analogy of God as a father invites us to consider our own relationship with Him. How does this image shape your understanding of God's nature and His willingness to respond to your needs?



Questions for Reflection

1. What does the Lord's Prayer mean to you personally? How does it shape your understanding of your relationship with God?
2. Reflect on a time when you felt your prayers were unanswered. How did you respond, and how might this passage encourage you to approach prayer differently?
3. How does viewing God as a loving father affect your prayer life? In what ways can you cultivate a deeper sense of trust in His provision and care?
4. In Genesis 18:20-32, Abraham intercedes for Sodom. How does this model of intercessory prayer inspire you to pray for others? Who might you feel called to pray for this week?
5. Colossians 2:12-14 speaks of being forgiven and released from our debts. How does this understanding of forgiveness influence your relationship with God and with others?
6. How can you make prayer a more integral part of your daily life? What practical steps can you take to ensure that you are persistent in your communication with God? ☐

TO MOVE ASIDE SO THAT CHRIST MAY ABIDE

Andrea Tornielli on the first words of Pope Leo XIV

Some words are destined to set the course. In the first homily of Pope Leo XIV, what stands out first is the opening, with Peter's repeated profession of faith, those same words John Paul I chose to repeat at the end of his homily during the inaugural Mass of his pontificate: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." But there is also a vision of the Church, and of how any service within the Church should be exercised, which emerges in the final lines. He quotes St. Ignatius of Antioch, on his way to martyrdom: "Then I will truly be a disciple of Jesus Christ, when the world no longer sees my body." The great Church Father was referring to being devoured by beasts, and yet those words shine light on every moment and circumstance of Christian life: "His words," said the new Bishop of Rome, "apply more generally to an indispensable commitment for all those in the Church who exercise a ministry of authority. It is to move aside so that Christ may remain, to make oneself small so that he may be known and glorified, to spend oneself to the utmost so that all may have the opportunity to know and love him." To move aside, become small, so that He may be known. Abandon every desire for the spotlight, every worldly reliance on power, structures, money, or religious marketing strategies, and instead entrust oneself to the One who guides the Church, without whom, as He Himself said, we can do nothing. To surrender to the action of His grace, which always goes before us.

In this perspective from the new Pope, there is also a meaningful continuity with his predecessor, Francis, who often cited the *mysterium lunae*, the image of the moon used by the Church Fathers to describe the Church, which would be deluded to think it can shine with its own light, as it can only reflect the light of Another.

At the beginning of his journey, the new Pope, a missionary born in the United States and who lived on the peripheries of the world as a shepherd "with the smell of the sheep", seems to echo the words of John the Baptist about Jesus: He must increase, and I must decrease. Everything in the Church exists for the mission, that is, so that He may increase. Everyone in the Church, from the Pope to the last of the baptized, must become small so that Jesus may be known, so that He may be the protagonist. This reflects Augustine's restlessness in the search for truth, the search for God, which becomes the restlessness of wanting to know Him more and more, and to go beyond oneself to make Him known to others, so that the desire for God may be rekindled in everyone.

The choice of the name Leo is striking, as it directly connects him to the great and ever-relevant tradition of the Church's Social Doctrine: the defense of workers, and the call for a more just economic and



financial system. Equally significant is the simplicity of his first greeting, the invocation of Easter peace, a peace that is urgently needed, and the openness to all that echoes Francis' "everyone, everyone, everyone." Striking as well is his desire to continue on the synodal path. And finally, touching is the Hail Mary recited yesterday with the people of God, on the day of the Supplication to Our Lady of Pompeii, and the final invocation in his first homily, a grace requested "with the help of the tender intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church."

Yesterday, once again, we were reminded of this: at the moment of the *extra omnes*, something happened in the Sistine Chapel that cannot be fully explained by human logic or systems. That 133 cardinals, from every corner of the earth, many of whom had never met before, could gather to elect the Bishop of Rome and Pastor of the universal Church within twenty-four hours is a beautiful sign of unity. The witness of the Successor of Peter, which just days ago shone in the frailty of Francis and in his final Easter blessing to the people, has now passed to a gentle missionary bishop, a son of Saint Augustine. The Church is alive because Jesus is alive and present, guiding it through fragile disciples willing to disappear so that He, and He alone, may remain. □

ALWAYS MAY!

By Pierluigi Menato, TA/ID

As he trudged up the final stretch of the hedge-lined lane, James saw his house. It was a white stately home with a wide balcony where his mother's laundry was drying in the sun, surrounded by a small flower garden.

On that distant evening, James returned feeling young and happy. Soon, Sara, his fiancée with a generous and kind heart, would become his wife. He had imagined that the house would be beautiful, worthy of welcoming her as a precious treasure.

May had painted the earth and sky in brilliant light, and the meadows stretched out before him, vast and full of flowers, rich with promises like his young heart.

There was no shadow over James' dreams. After studying hard and establishing himself in the professional world with his determined will, he longed to start a family and have children.

At home, however, James found his mother crying — a desperate cry that seemed neverending.

"Mamma, why are you crying?" he asked.

Through sobs which tore at her breast, she reached out to her son and revealed the harsh truth. A risky speculation, some counterfeited bills of exchange, and the betrayal of business partners

had destroyed what his father — who had died two years earlier — had built with hard work. Creditors were now threatening to confiscate their home, along with the garden, the fields, and meadows. Everything would be lost, and his family, which had been accustomed to a comfortable life, would face hard times.

This distressing thought froze James' generous heart. As the eldest son — followed by two sisters — he felt like the pillar of the house, the support, and the source of love. The weight of responsibility for saving his family's and their estate now fell on his young shoulders.

James wrapped his arms around his beloved mother, who had, in the early years of her marriage, bent over the plough to bring home bread from the earth for him and the family. He whispered words of comfort into her ear, words filled with the energy of his



twenties and a resolve to work hard, even if it meant sacrificing his own love and future.

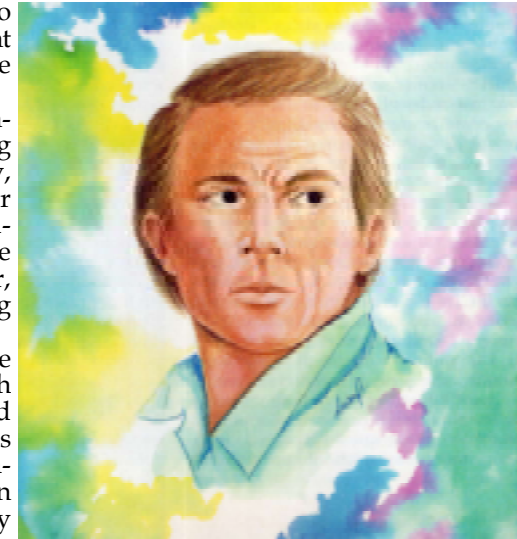
After the tragic downfall that would bring dishonour to his family, Sara could retract her promise; with bitter sadness in his heart, he would leave her forever, even if it meant sacrificing his dream to work hard.

One evening as he looked at his home, which seemed peaceful and almost asleep, he saw his mother and sisters gathered in the large kitchen after dinner. With a heavy heart, James decided to step outside.

That night in May was utterly enchanting. In the distance, the mountains shimmered under the moonlight, and the water from the nearby fountain sparkled like silver veins. The road seemed to dissolve in the glow of the night.

As James looked around, he suddenly felt overwhelmed by a painful reality. Two paths lay before him at this difficult moment: the path of love and the path of duty. One path promised the fulfillment of a deep, yearning desire: Sara, a home, many children, and love. The other path was hard and demanding, calling for dark sacrifices, endless struggles, and unbearable exhaustion. He knew that he could regain the house through hard work. His sisters could still achieve their dreams, and their mother would find comfort after such a brutal shock.

Ultimately, he chose the path of duty, diving into his work until



his strength began to wane.

On a clear May night, bathed in the moon's silver glow, the sky seemed to radiate supreme harmony. With turmoil in his soul and his head feeling like it was caught in an iron vice James walked briskly towards Sara's house. He was determined to confess everything to her and plead with her not to think piously about marrying him. Yet, in the end, he felt like a guilty man fleeing from a confrontation, unable to face her at the last moment.

He longed to embrace life, which had affected him so bitterly. Yes, he wanted to win at life, but the battle felt overwhelming! When he finally reached Sara's house, he found himself too weak to step over the threshold. Why should he destroy the hopes of that faithful heart? Leaning his head against the garden gate, he let the enchanting lullaby of the night soothe him. When he realized tears were streaming down

his cheeks, he straightened up, took one last look at Sara's window, and, feeling profoundly alone with his love and sorrow, he began his journey back. Sara never saw him again.

He spent years in a distant city, working tirelessly to clear his name and save his home. With relentless energy, he toiled through long nights until dawn broke over the sea. When fatigue overcame him and the haunting memories of the past filled the vast office, he would stand by the window and watch the boats quietly sail away from the shore into the unknown blue expanse. The fishermen faced tremendous challenges and made great sacrifices to earn a living, yet they did so with serenity. Why couldn't he find happiness too?

He had made significant sacrifices, pouring his heart and soul into his efforts. Despite his family's financial ruin, Sara had waited for him with unwavering faith, determined to share in his struggles, even as she endured her own hardships. However, he had failed to return or even communicate with her. As time passed inexorably, Sara found happiness with another man, becoming a joyful wife and experiencing motherhood blissfully.

Exhausted from a difficult journey, James eventually returned home seeking some rest. From the steep lane lined with green meadows, he caught sight of his beautiful home, gleaming white in the sunshine, framed by a lovely garden. He could also see the darkened balcony where his mother's laundry was drying in the sun. Although it was still May, James



felt tired, and his sunken, dark eyes did not sparkle as they once did. His elderly mother awaited him in the living room, her arms outstretched, eagerly pulling him to her heart. Maria, his devout older sister, was at home with their mother, while Chiara had long since retired to a monastery.

It didn't matter that the sacrifice had come at the cost of a bitter, haphazard renunciation. James gazed at the joyful faces, the calm brows, the beautiful meadows, and listened to the chirping of

birds resonating in the tranquility of his mountains behind his home. He felt a deep sense of peace and infinite sweetness. He was getting on in years and he grew quieter. In the late dusk, he took long walks along the path that climbed briskly, full of curves and hiding places.

He isolated himself in the solitude of his soul, mirroring the solitude of nature. He let go of the past and embraced the quiet present, finding happiness in the serenity reflected in his elderly mother's eyes.

One day, as dusk approached, he was walking down the church lane, lost in thought about a barefoot boy carrying a load of hay, when the sound of voices interrupted him. He decided to sit down at the edge of the path and let the group pass by. From around the bend, amongst the towering fir trees, a group of young men and women appeared, returning from a trip to the mountains. The last person in the group was a tall brunette maiden with a beautiful smile and a cascade of bright blonde hair that caught James' attention. He quickly looked away from her and feigned interest in the group's slow pace until a sharp cry made him jump. The same young lady who had captured his gaze had slipped on the pavement. James reached out to help her up and asked with genuine concern in his kind voice:

"Are you hurt?" he asked.

She lifted her deep, beautiful eyes to his face and replied with a sigh, "A little, thank you. That's very kind of you."

Those eyes reminded him of Sara's, his former fiancée—his love

preserved in the depths of his soul like an indestructible treasure.

It was his mother who eventually revealed the secret to him.

"James, do you know who that young lady is?" she asked.

"I don't know her, Mother!" he replied.

"That's Anna Ferretti, Sara's daughter."

"Oh, I had the feeling it was!"

They fell silent, holding hands tightly to avoid losing each other: one lost in the memory of a dream, the other in the painful doubt of having caused harm.

"Have I caused you pain, my son?" she asked.

"No, mother," he shook his head as he replied.

Instead, the memories of distant times burned brightly in his soul, and the weight of his sacrifice turned into a form of heroism.

Two days later, James set out once more. After a brief visit to the convent, where Clare, beautiful in her white wimple as a Benedictine nun, who whispered words of eternal life to him, he continued on to the city, prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice of his life through hard work.

Years had passed since James returned, but what a return it was! He had become hardened by fatigue, crushed by the bitterness of loneliness, and devastated by the weight of love from others. He had given everything to his family—his life and health—never asking for anything in return. In the shadows, death loomed, waiting to seize him.

On a serene May dawn, deep in the blue mountains, he slipped away in peace while gazing with his weary pupils as they looked at his sister, who was full of life. □

FIORETTI OF DON BOSCO - 67

by Michele Molineris

299. You will grow, but elsewhere... (1883)

In 1883, despite his age-related health issues, Don Bosco travelled to France, arriving in Lille on the Belgian border on May 5. He stayed with the Baron of Montigny, who advocated for the establishment of a Salesian house in this large industrial centre, which was under threat from Marxist propaganda.

News of his arrival, published in Paris newspapers a few days in advance, generated great anticipation in the city. As the day of his arrival approached, many people came out to greet him. Enthusiasm escalated when it was rumoured that, on the same day he visited a sick woman, he had caused a notable improvement in her condition with his blessing.

The newspapers depicted him as an "elderly priest who climbs the pulpit with great difficulty, often with the assistance of others. His gaunt features resemble those of the Curé of Ars. He has a foreign accent and speaks simply, rarely becoming animated except when discussing God, religion, and the salvation of souls."

Every morning, after Mass, he would hold an audience at the orphanage of St. Gabriel. From there, he would be accompanied to visit the sick or to have breakfast with wealthy families who eagerly vied for the honour of having him at their table.

When he was shown the schedule indicating the places he would visit each day during the

patients' hours, he examined it closely and then said to Don Rua, "But look at this schedule! I would have expected today to include visits to such and such a church, a pilgrimage to this shrine, a day of fasting and retreat, followed by a spiritual conference. Instead, I see: lunch, lunch, lunch. Blessed be God!" He expressed these words not in a haughty tone, which was unusual for him, but with a resigned simplicity that brought laughter from those present.

Attending such banquets was no easy feat for him, yet he always maintained a cheerful demeanour. Once, while discussing his successes in Paris, someone remarked that he had every reason to be proud of his achievements. Don Bosco, however, remained silent. Another person then asked him, "What are your thoughts on this?"

With a good-natured and somewhat comical seriousness, he replied, "Well, I'm contemplating whether or not I should feel proud." His unexpected response sparked a wave of good humour among those present.

At one lavish banquet hosted by a gentleman from high society, Don Bosco was struck by the grandeur of the setting and the exquisite food. Finally, he could not resist asking the host a curious question: "I would like to ask you something."

- "Say, please ask."

- "But my question is a bit indiscreet."

- "Do you think so? Please, speak freely."

- "I would like to know how much this lunch cost."

- "If that's your only curiosity, I

can satisfy it momentarily." He then called the cook, who calculated the cost and reported it was twelve thousand lira.

"That's a bit much for poor Don Bosco. If my youngsters had known about it, wouldn't it have been better if they had turned it into *pagnottè* (little buns) for us?"

"You can do both very well," the master replied, amused. Before finishing his lunch, he handed the cook an envelope containing as many banknotes as there were plates.

Mr. Cordonnier, a wealthy wine merchant, lived opposite the Saint Gabriel orphanage. He had been thinking about marrying a good young woman from the countryside for some time, but he decided to keep it to himself until he consulted Don Bosco.

As soon as the woman was in his presence, before she could even speak, the saint said: "The plan you are considering is perfect; carry it out without fear. It will bring happiness to both you and the young woman."

At the convent of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, a little girl was presented to him. She was quite small and feared she would not be accepted into the convent where she wished to reside. As she passed in front of him, she said to Don Bosco, "Father, will you pray for me to grow?"

"Daughter," replied the saint, "you will grow... but elsewhere." Shortly after, the young woman died and went to a place where everyone attains perfect stature.

Now, let's consider the case of Mr. and Mrs. Montigny. They married at a young age and were blessed with two daughters.

Unfortunately, their joy was short-lived, as both daughters died of consumption in their youth. These losses plunged their once-happy home into deep sadness.

One day, Don Bosco visited Lille and, after enjoying their hospitality, said to them as he was leaving, "A cradle must be prepared here." Not long after – within a year – a child was born, who would later be known as the miracle child. He was baptized by the Archbishop of Cambrai, who bestowed upon him the name Alfredo. (*M.B.*, XVI, cap. 8° *passim*).

300. I will pray for your mother (1883)

A lady from Lyons received a visit from Don Bosco. At home, she had an eighteen-year-old maid, who had been taken from a women's hospice as an orphan.

As the holy priest was about to leave, the lady asked him to bless her maid, who was standing at the door, adding, "She needs it, poor thing! She is an orphan."

After observing the girl for a moment, Don Bosco blessed her and said, "I will pray for your unfortunate mother."

"Her mother! But then you are not an orphan, as you say?" exclaimed the lady.

At these words, the girl confessed that her mother was alive but that this was kept a secret because the unfortunate woman had abandoned her children to live a disreputable life. (*D'Espinney, Don Bosco*, 246).

301. She will die when her daughters give her permission (1883)

On May 17, 1883, *Le Monde* reported on a memorable occa-

sion: "Seeing Don Bosco pray is like heavenly dew cooling our hearts." After the Mass of the Visitation, the gentlemen who attended gathered before him, eager for a blessing, a look, or a word from him. He brought solace to the community with his visit since Cardinal Guibert had granted him permission to enter the cloister. However, he had to use a secret door; otherwise, it would have taken him an hour to pass through the chapel.

He urged the assembled nuns to remain faithful to their rule. He was then introduced to the former Sister Superior, Mother Maria Kotzka Le Pan De Ligny, who was in her seventies and suffering greatly. The sisters, who cared deeply for her, requested that Don Bosco prolong her life.

In response to this heartfelt yet naive request, he smiled and, taking a moment to gather his thoughts, replied, "It is undoubtedly not your wish, Mother, to stay here much longer, but you will need to live a little longer down here, and you will depart when your daughters permit you to go."

"Oh," said the nuns, "our mother will see all of us off first for eternity, as we will never give her permission to die."

Yet, nine years later, they had to grant it to her. The mother's suffering had intensified to such an extent that living had become synonymous with suffering. The daughters could no longer bear to witness her prolonged torment, so they prayed to the Lord to call her to Himself. The Lord answered their prayers. (M.B., XVI, 176).

302. Protector of tinkers (1883)

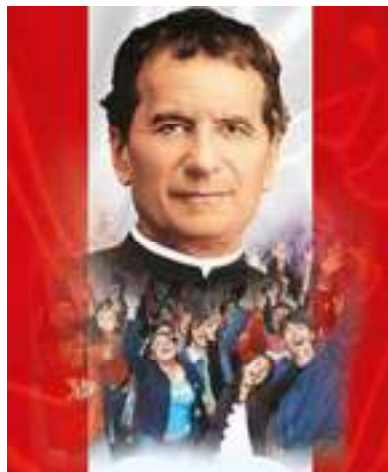
In Marseilles, Don Bosco, along with the pupils from the boarding,

visited the Olive family, who had always been very generous in supporting him and his works. On this occasion, Mr. and Mrs. Olive themselves wanted to serve Don Bosco and the students at the table.

While the pupils enjoyed the gardens, a young maid rushed to Mrs. Olive and said, "Madam, the pot you use to cook the soup for the young people is leaking badly, and I can't get it off the fire. They will have to go without soup."

The mistress had great faith in Don Bosco and came up with an idea. She called together all the young people and said, "Listen, if you want to eat the soup, kneel here and recite *an Our Father*, a *Hail Mary* and a *Glory Be* for Don Bosco so that he will make the pot stop leaking."

They obeyed her, and the pot instantly stopped leaking. This event is historical, and when Don Bosco heard about it, he laughed heartily, saying, "From now on, we shall call Don Bosco the protector of the tinkers." (M.B., XVII, 56).□



Don Bosco's Madonna



OUR LADY OF MT CARMEL: A LEGACY OF FAITH, DEVOTION AND PROTECTION

by A.B. Bosco

Mount Carmel is a revered mountain in northern Israel, overlooking the Mediterranean coast. It holds significant spiritual importance in both biblical history and Christian tradition. On July 16, the Feast of Mount Carmel celebrates its rich heritage, which dates back to the prophet Elijah and continues through the Carmelite Order. More than a geographical site, Mount Carmel symbolizes unwavering faith, devotion, and the protective presence of the Virgin Mary.

The Inspiring History of Mount Carmel

Mount Carmel is steeped in history, particularly during the remarkable era of the prophet Elijah. His legendary confrontation with the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18 highlighted God's supremacy when fire fell from heaven to consume a soaked sacrifice. This miracle established Mount Carmel as a sacred site of divine encounter and deepened its spiritual significance.

In the years that followed, her-



mits dedicated to prayer and contemplation embraced Mount Carmel, preserving Elijah's legacy. They established a community of profound faith committed to the Virgin Mary. Today, Mount Carmel remains a powerful beacon of inspiration, reflecting the enduring strength of faith and devotion.

Legacy of Elijah

Elijah's influence reaches far be-

yond his earthly ministry. In 1 Kings 18:42-45, his prophecy of a small cloud bringing rain is viewed by Christians as a powerful foreshadowing of the Virgin Mary, symbolizing her connection to the Holy Spirit and her pivotal role in the birth of Christ. The Carmelite Order, established on Mount Carmel, proudly considers itself heirs to Elijah's prophetic mission. His unwavering devotion to God inspires prophets throughout the ages and serves as a guiding principle for the Carmelites, urging us all to embrace and continue his legacy of faith.

From Hermits to Christians

After Pentecost, the hermits on Mount Carmel embraced Christianity by seeking baptism from the Apostles. Known as the "Brothers of Mary," they demonstrated profound devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, connecting themselves to the prophet Elijah and the wider Christian community. Their reverence for Mary as the Mother of the Church became a defining characteristic of the Carmelite community.

Church Built by St. Helena

In 326 AD, Empress Helena, mother of Emperor Constantine, visited Mount Carmel and commissioned a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary. This church quickly became a vibrant center for Marian devotion, drawing hermits and pilgrims seeking solace and spiritual connection. Its establishment marked a significant moment in Mount Carmel's history, solidifying its status as a vital site for pilgrimage and prayer.

Impact of Islamic Conquest

In the 7th century, the Islamic

conquest of the Holy Land forced many Christian hermits on Mount Carmel to flee or go into hiding. Despite the challenges posed by this conquest, the Carmelite tradition persisted and continued to spread throughout the Christian world. Some of the displaced hermits played a significant role in the growth of the Carmelite Order, which was formally established in the 12th century. The Order's emphasis on prayer, contemplation, and devotion to Mary helped preserve Mount Carmel's spiritual heritage even in the face of adversity.

The Carmelite Order

By the early 13th century, the hermits of Mount Carmel established the Carmelite Order, guided by a rule of life from Albert, the Patriarch of Jerusalem. This framework emphasized contemplation, prayer, and communal living, enabling members to dedicate their lives to God, the Virgin Mary, and service to others. As the Order spread across Europe, its members became known for their deep commitment to prayer and devotion. Rooted in the teachings of Elijah and a reverence for the Virgin Mary, the Carmelite spiritual tradition continues to inspire people of faith worldwide.

St. Simon Stock and the Brown Scapular

In 1251, during a period of crisis for the Carmelite Order, St. Simon Stock, a Carmelite friar, experienced a vision of the Virgin Mary. In this vision, Mary presented him with the Brown Scapular, symbolizing her protection and care for the Carmelite community. This scapular became an important

sacramental, representing Mary's maternal protection for those who wore it and dedicated themselves to prayer and service. The gift of the Brown Scapular held profound significance for the Carmelite Order, reaffirming the connection between Mount Carmel, the Virgin Mary, and the faithful.

What is a Scapular?

A scapular is a religious garment worn by Christians. It usually consists of two small pieces of cloth connected by straps that are worn over the shoulders. The Brown Scapular, in particular, is associated with the Carmelite Order and symbolizes Mary's protective mantle. It serves as a visible sign of the wearer's commitment to a life of faith, prayer, and devotion to the Virgin Mary.

The scapular functions as both a physical garment and a spiritual symbol. It reminds the wearer of Mary's protective intercession and encourages a deeper commitment to the Christian life.

Biblical Explanation of a Scapular

The scapular holds deep significance rooted in biblical tradition. Elijah's cloak, which he passed to Elisha, symbolizes God's prophetic authority (2 Kings 2:13-14). Likewise, St. Paul's handkerchiefs showcase how divine power can work through everyday items (Acts 19:11-12). The Brown Scapular, then, becomes a powerful emblem of commitment to God and belief in Mary's intercession, providing wearers with divine grace and protection in their lives.

History of the Brown Scapular

The Brown Scapular has a profound history that began with a vi-

sion granted to St. Simon Stock in 1251, where the Virgin Mary bestowed the scapular as a symbol of her protection. Over the years, it has become a vital sacramental in the Carmelite Order, inviting laypeople into its spiritual benefits. Wearing the scapular signifies not only a cherished tradition but also promises of divine protection and salvation, with the belief that it can lead to a shortened stay in purgatory. Embrace the Brown Scapular and discover the grace it can bring to your spiritual journey.

Testimony

Many saints and holy figures have attested to the power of the Brown Scapular. St. John Bosco, known for his devotion to Mary, wore the scapular, which remained intact after his death. Similarly, St. Alphonsus Liguori, a renowned theologian and founder of the Redemptorist Order, also wore the Brown Scapular, which was unscathed after his passing. This serves as a testament to his sanctity and deep devotion.

Conclusion

Mount Carmel is a powerful symbol of faith, devotion, and divine protection. Its spiritual significance dates back to the Prophet Elijah and remains relevant today. A key event in its history is the Virgin Mary's appearance to St. Simon Stock, where she gave him the Brown Scapular as a sign of her protection. The Carmelite Order honors this legacy, inspiring people worldwide to live lives of devotion, prayer, and service. The Feast of Mount Carmel invites us to reflect on this rich heritage and accept the Virgin Mary's guiding and nurturing presence in our lives. □



SARAH LAPORTA

MY VOCATION STORY

THE DREAM THAT WAS ALBANIA

Interview with Fr. Michele Gentile

*A note from superiors changed my life
and the seed sown grew into a flourishing plant*

Can you introduce yourself?

I am Michele Gentile, a Salesian priest and missionary currently serving in Albania. Born on April 29, 1940, in Rignano Garganico, Italy, I come from a peasant family as the fifth of eight siblings. My uncle, Fr. Angelo Gen, inspired many Salesian vocations, and my brother, Fr. Antonio, shares this calling.

Although there was no Salesian house in my hometown, it was a source of many "Sons of Don Bosco" and various religious vocations. I completed my aspirantate studies in Torre Annunziata and my novitiate in Portici, where I became a religious on August 16, 1957.

After high school in Sicily, I earned an engineering degree in Bari and pursued theological studies in Turin. I was ordained a priest on April 3, 1971, in Bari. For twenty years, I dedicated myself to pastoral work across Puglia before finally embracing my missionary vocation.

Arrival in Albania and first activities

In July 1991, along with two fellow brothers, I travelled to Albania, where we witnessed the profound material and spiritual devastation that had resulted

from the collapse of communism. This experience ignited our commitment to offer hope and support to the youth in need.

Don Viganò and the two Works in Shkodra and Tirana

During my final year of aspirantate, testimonies from missionaries ignited my desire to serve. At 52, I joined six confreres from various provinces to establish the Salesian presence in Albania, opening houses in Shkodra and Tirana. As our mission grew, we expanded to Kosovo with projects in Pristina, Gjilan, and Lushnje.

This journey is about transforming lives and guiding young people toward a hopeful future, answering a powerful call to action and inspiration.

Arrival in Albania in Shkodra on 24 September 1992

On Sunday, September 20, the Salesians were warmly welcomed in Lecce during a vibrant celebration of their missionary commitment at the Basilica of San Domenico Savio. On September 24, they arrived in Albania, inspired by Mary's Help to Christians.

The dedicated team included Fr. Michele Gentile, Fr. Oreste Valle, and Mr. Francesco Gippetto in Tirana, alongside Fr. Zef Gashi,

Fr. Renato Torressan, and clerics Skënder Qerimi and Lekë Oroshi in Shkodër, all committed to nurturing hope and growth in their communities.

Thus began my missionary experience that changed my life. It was a world vastly different from Italy, with a language that was quite challenging to learn and a multi-religious nation emerging from a dictatorship that had proclaimed itself atheist. I had to embrace a reality that was unlike anything I had experienced

before and share in the Albanian people's early years of economic, social, and religious recovery.

On April 19, 1996, we inaugurated the first school buildings in a ceremony attended by the President of the Italian Republic, Mr. Scalfaro, and the Albanian President, Sali Berisha. The following year, we celebrated the opening of the Oratory premises with Rector Major Don Vecchi, who would later return to Albania to witness the religious professions of the first five Salesians.

One of my most impactful experiences was in Shkodra during the civil war in March 1997. The streets were filled with cannons and tanks, and the constant sound of gunfire made it impossible to sleep at night. I was afraid to leave



the city, but I felt a strong desire to attend Sunday Mass and participate in Holy Week services in the various villages. I found courage in knowing that the Lord was by my side.

For over 15 years, I served as either the parish administrator or parish priest in various villages around Shkodra. During that time, I witnessed many young people and families emigrate to Italy and America in search of work and a better quality of life. I traveled to different cities in Italy and America to connect with these families, who welcomed me warmly and helped me rebuild the churches in their home villages.

I am currently in Tirana. For seven years, I have been working pastorally in a peripheral area of

the parish. During this time, I have encountered many impoverished people, mainly immigrants from northern Albania who have settled in the suburbs. While they have retained some signs of faith, they need to deepen their Christian values to confront the rampant materialism here as well. This challenge has tested me in my ability to bear witness to Christ and make Him known, particularly among those who identify as Catholic merely because of their family traditions.

That is why I have committed not only to celebrating Mass on Sundays but also to regularly visiting families, meeting parents in their homes, and bringing a smile to everyone, especially the children. There has been much spiritual joy in witnessing some young people, even from Muslim or Betashi families, embrace the Christian faith and live it to the fullest. I pray to the Lord to compensate for my shortcomings.

Future of the Congregation in Albania

After 33 years of Salesian presence in Albania, the Lord has blessed the works in both Tirana and Shkodra. Tirana hosts an elementary, middle, and high school with around 800 students, along with a parish, an Oratory-Youth Centre that serves children and young people of various religions, along with their mothers. Additionally, there is a day center for about 100 Roma children.



From Albania, the Salesian Work has expanded into neighbouring Kosovo, where there is an established parish and two new schools have been added. The visits from the Rectors Major — Fr. Chavez, Fr. Vecchi, and Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime — have served as encouragement to continue these efforts with courage and to strengthen these initiatives. The seed planted during the presentation by the Nuncio has grown into a thriving organization, and there are expectations for further development in the future. To support this growth, the Superiors plan to create a delegation affiliated with the Southern Province. □



IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Clever Parents

It was time for the Smith family to return home after a visit to New York City. Mr. Smith called a cab.

"How much to take the whole family to the station?" He asked.

The cabbie, sensing he was up against a bargain hunter, replied: "It'll be two dollars for wach of you and your wife. Your kids can ride free."

Turning to the children. Mr. Smith directed "Pile in, youngsters, Ma and I will take the subway."

Lost Everything

Then there's the fatierh who died and left his prize collection of 343 clocks to his son - who spent the rest of his life winding up the estate.

A Polish Story

Making the rounds in Poland these days is a story about a man named Kohn, a long-time communist who applies to migrate. At the passport office, the official is so shocked that he calls Kohn in and says, "A loyal party member like you must have a very unusual reason to want to leave his beautiful homeland."

"Two reasons," says Kohn. "Last night, my neighbour came to me and said, 'Kohn, when the regime collapses, all the communists will hang - even ones like you and me who joined just to get along.' So I don't want to wait for that to happen. I want out."

"Oh Kohn," the official says: with a smile, "I can assure you that this regime is in no danger of collapsing." "That" says Kohn, "is my second reason." □

Every Year

A visitor asked a young boy his birth date.

"October 10," he answered promptly.

"What year?" the visitor inquired.

"Why EVERY year!" he exclaimed.

The Undertaker

"Tommy, who said, 'Give me liberty or give me death?'"

"Patrick Henry."

"That's right. Now, Mike, who said 'I have come to bury Caesar, not to praise him?'"

"The undertaker." □

Great Financier

Noah was probably the first great financier. He wisely floated his stock while everyone lese was being liquidated.

No use for God

Tying to console a little girl whose kitten had been run over, Father Ryan said, "Doesn't it make you feel good that your kitty has gone to be with God?"

"Don't be silly," the little girl answered. "What would God want with a dead cat?"

Two Questions

The fortune-teller who charged twenty-five dollars for reading, explained, "That fee entitles you to ask me two questions."

"Isn't that a lot of money for only two questions?" the startled customer asked. "Yes it is," answered the fortune-teller gravely. "And now, what is your second question?" □

DEPICTING LIFE

The painter Gerd Gisder, known for his many works in film and television, was once approached by a wealthy industrialist.

"You must paint a picture for me. A great painting!" the industrialist insisted.

"What should the subject of the painting be?" Gisder asked.

"Life! You must paint life!" replied the industrialist.

Gerd Gisder agreed and promised to complete the painting within a week.

When the contractor contacted the artist again after the deadline had passed, he was eager to see what the painter had created. He contemplated whether Gisder had depicted a tree symbolizing the tree of life, a path representing the journey of life, or perhaps water as the origin and essence of all life.

The artist then took the industrialist to his studio, where an oil painting stood on the easel. The customer was astonished as he stared at the artwork, wrinkle-ing his forehead and squinting, pondering silently.

After stepping back two paces and putting on his glasses, he exclaimed, "And a swing!"

The artist nodded and, as if he had anticipated the man's thoughts, explained, "Yes, a swing! It is my favourite symbol of life." He pointed to the swing in his studio that had served as his model. Giving it a gentle push, the swing moved back and forth, continuously rising and falling.

The painter continued, "Who-



ever sits on a seesaw is in constant motion, just like life itself. The principles of a swing represent the ups and downs, reflecting the experiences we all face."

After a brief pause, he added, "If you look closely, you'll see that the

swing has more ups than downs."

He took a long, thoughtful pause before saying, "But what's essential about a swing is that it is always held aloft." □

SOMETHINGS TO REMEMBER

Here's an important truth to remember on your journey to becoming your best self: there is no ultimate version of you. Growth isn't about reaching a destination; it's about continually evolving into your best self in every moment.

This idea may feel overwhelming, especially since we often believe in a perfect version to strive for. However, growth is a journey filled with ups and downs—it often looks like two steps forward and one step back. Setbacks aren't failures; they show you're learning and progressing.

Instead of trying to change everything at once, focus on small, manageable steps each day. Real change comes from consistent actions, not overnight transformations. Be patient with yourself and appreciate each step of the journey.

Celebrate your progress and embrace setbacks as part of your growth. Remember, even when you take two steps forward and one back, you're still moving ahead. Embrace this journey, and know it is enough.

LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

Belated thanks to Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for the safe delivery and the gift of a baby boy to my daughter after six years of marriage. He is names Liam Savio and soon within a year the gift of a baby girl, who is named Amara Savia. Please continue to bless and protect them always.

Aida Barreto, Goa

POPE'S WORLDWIDE PRAYER NETWORK JULY 2026

For formation in discernment

Let us pray that we might again learn how to discern, to know how to choose paths of life and reject everything that leads us away from Christ and the Gospel.

Regd RNI no. 9360/57;

posted at Mumbai Patrika Channel Sorting Office
on 1st & 2nd of every month
Date of Publication: 1st of every month

Subs: (one copy Rs. 20/-); **Inland Rs. 200p.a;** **Airmail: Rs 500 p.a.**

THAT GARLAND OF LOVE

Let us unite in prayer to Our Lady, for, the cherished Holy Rosary is a powerful blessing, allowing us to express our devotion through the comforting repetition of *the "Hail Mary."* By incorporating this beautiful practice into our daily lives, we create a tapestry of praise for Mary and her Divine Son. The Church calls us to keep these sacred words alive by committing to greeting Our Lady each day with a heartfelt prayer or moment of reflection, filling our lives with hope and light. When we turn to Mary, a source of boundless goodness and mercy, we discover hope in her nurturing presence. Together, let us uplift one another, trusting that our challenges can become a source of collective strength through Mary's guidance. *(Pope St. Paul VI)*

Don Bosco's Madonna, has developed to its present form from a folder published in 1937, by late Fr Aurelius Maschio, on behalf of the Salesians of Don Bosco, Bombay. The magazine is sent to all who ask for it, even though there is a fixed subscription (Rs 200/- India & Rs 400/- Airmail)). We trust in the generosity of our readers/benefactors.

Whatever you send us will help cover the expenses of printing and mailing; the surplus if any, is devoted to the support of orphans and poor boys in our schools and apostolic centres.

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

You can help by establishing a Perpetual Burse with:

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

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

Send your offerings by Payee cheque or Draft on Mumbai banks;
MO/PO/INTL MO/BPO/Bequests, Wills, Perpetual Burses, all favouring Don Bosco's Madonna or Bombay Salesian Society or Rev. Fr. Edwin D'Souza, (Trustee).
Please address all correspondence to:

Rev. Fr. Edwin D'Souza, sdb.,
SHRINE OF DON BOSCO'S MADONNA,
Matunga - MUMBAI - 400 019 - INDIA
Phone/Fax: 91-22- 2414 6320, email: dbmshrine@gmail.com