

# DON BOSCO'S MADONNA

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## CONTENTS

From The Editor's Desk: <i>Judith</i> .....	3
Give Me Three Words - <i>Don Giampaolo Dianin</i> .....	4
Life is Simple - <i>Maria Chiara Bregolin</i> .....	6
Youth on the Move: This One Life of Yours - <i>Anastasia Dias</i> .....	7
Encounter with the Risen Lord - <i>Don Chino Biscontin</i> .....	9
Great Bible Heroes: Thomas Meets The Risen Lord - <i>Ian Pinto sdb</i> .....	11
Witnesses In And For Our Times St. Frederick (18 July).....	13
My Day In Court.....	14
Lectio Divina: The Wisdom of Solomon - <i>Don Carlo Broccardo</i> .....	16
Quietspaces: Beatitudes in Reverse - <i>Pope Francis</i> .....	18
The Old-Fashioned Mom - <i>Pierluigi Menato</i> .....	20
Fioretti of Don Bosco - 18 - <i>Michele Molineris</i> .....	24
Salesian Saints: Maria Troncatti.....	27
Reflecting on Mary: From Her Fiat To her Magnificat - <i>Maria Ko Ha Fong</i> .....	29
NewsBits.....	31
<i>In a Cheerful Mood</i> .....	32
<i>Loving Children to their Loving Mother</i> .....	33
<i>The Devotion of the Three Hail Marys</i> .....	34
<i>They Are Grateful to Our Lady &amp; Don Bosco</i> .....	34
<i>Thanks to Dear St. Dominic Savio</i> .....	35



*We beseech, O Lord,  
your mercy,  
that we may, by  
imitating the  
Blessed Virgin Mary,  
serve worthily  
the mystery of  
our redemption.  
Through Christ  
our Lord.*

## From The Editor's Desk

JUDITH

I'm thinking of the first years of my priesthood and when I would go home for a few days of holiday. I was still a new priest and there were some elderly 'friends' (old enough to be my grandparents) whom I would make a point to visit. It was these folk facing their eventide, who seemed to see me in a new light. I was no longer 'the young boy who found time from his studies to visit them.' I particularly and fondly remember a lady named Judith. She was well into her seventies when I first met her. Never married, she lived alone in a small cottage on the outskirts of town. It was a modest little place by anyone's standards. Though she was still alert and full of life, her eyes were pretty dim, so generally she stayed close to home where she entertained a group of friends whose number grew smaller each year.

The first time I visited Judith I thought I knew how I must speak to her now that I had been ordained. I even revised in my head all the pastoral insights and techniques I would ever need. We had a pleasant visit and shared some coffee at her kitchen table, and when I got up to leave, I asked her whether she would like me to pray with her. Without a moment's hesitation she was cheerfully kneeling on her hard stone floor, and before I could say a word, she started to pray. I don't remember her exact words, but it was a simple prayer offered for this young priest kneeling beside her.

Almost thirty years later, I still feel warmed by the memory of Judith and her prayer. I remember feeling surprised initially that she was the one praying. After all, everyone knows that it is we the clergy who are supposed to do that! I was also touched that this dear old lady with so many problems of her own was more concerned about me than about herself.

That evening Judith taught me some important lessons. By her example she underscored that we are *all* called - clergy and laity alike - to minister to one another. Clergy do not have a corner on the faith and tranquility market. In fact, we very much need the prayers and caring support of lay persons everyday. As someone once pointed out, "beware of those clergy who always seem to have life and limb joyfully and seamlessly together, because they are the ones who usually don't."

Perhaps even more importantly, Judith demonstrated profoundly but simply that when we become more concerned about others than we are about ourselves, somehow the frustrations and burdens of life are easier to bear, or, as in Judith's case, seem to exist not at all.

*Fr. Ian Doulton sdb*

## GIVE ME THREE WORDS!

by Don Giampaolo Dianin

Valeria Rossi's song in Italy, "Give me three words" (*Dammi tre parole!*) became the catchphrase for the summer of 2001. The three simple and precious words for the youngsters that summer were: sun, heart and love. It was a catchy, simple song that everyone could hum and memorize...it became a hit immediately.

Many must have thought of that song when, on February 14, 2014, Pope Francis said those words to young newly weds: **please, thanks, sorry**. And in number 133 of *Amoris Laetitia* he repeated them once more, highlighting them for all spouses: "In our families when we are not overbearing and ask: 'Please?'; in

our families, when we are not selfish and can say: 'Thank you!'; and in our families when someone realizes that he or she did something wrong and is able to say 'Sorry!', our family experiences peace and joy."

It's trivial you might say! In fact these three words are the result of a beautiful relationship treated with care and attentiveness, which takes nothing for granted. At the same time they (these words) are a good foundation that can nourish a relationship that will become beautiful, sensitive and never taken for granted.

When the 'headiness' of the wedding celebration has passed and married life gets down to the humdrum activity of everyday

life, we experience a thousand and one small joys and gratification but also little conflicts and frustrations that are nothing very dramatic but which hurt like some headaches that are not life threatening but can get depressing and annoying.

The Pope's three words deal with three major questions in the life of every marriage: the differences between the two who celebrated a covenant does not erase each one's identity. Saying 'please' means I respect your person besides myself, even if we share our existence. Saying 'thank you' is believing that love is never taken for granted and what we give of ourselves is something precious and not begrudged; to say 'sorry' is to recognize that we are all poor, fragile and sinful and very often we make mistakes and hurt the person we love. So, let's take each of these words separately and reflect on them.

**Please.** It is a gentle request to enter the life of the person I love with respect and delicacy. Marriage is not a reunification of two halves that come together to complete one another. It is a well-known phrase that defines the other as "my better half." But the other half is not the half I miss, but a whole with which I celebrate a covenant of love for life. We are two unique and unrepeatable people, each with their own history and precise identity. No one can pretend to know everything about the other. Saying 'please' is respecting the other and respect is a characteristic of true love.

**Thanks.** The temptation to take everything for granted is always lurking around a marriage. It is polite to say 'thanks' to a stranger who has been attentive to me

while it is not, if that was my husband or wife doing the same thing; as if doing it is part of what the marriage contract entails. It is assumed that you clean the house, wash the dishes and tend to the laundry. We tell children to use this little word but then as adults we forget it! Gratitude is an important sentiment and it is a flower that grows in the soil of nobility. Jesus heals ten lepers but just one comes back to say thank you. And the Lord says: "And the other nine, where are they?" This applies to us too. Do we know how to say thanks? In the marriage relationship it is so important to keep alive the awareness that the other person is a gift of God and you say 'thank you' for the gifts of God.

**Sorry.** In life we make a lot of mistakes; we all make them. Maybe there is no day when we don't make any mistakes. The Bible says that the righteous person sins seven times a day. It is generally easy to accuse the other and justify oneself. Accusing the other for not asking for forgiveness is as old as Adam and Eve! We must learn to recognize our mistakes and apologize. "I'm sorry if I raised my voice today"; "I'm sorry I'm late"; "I'm sorry I've been so silent this week"; "I'm sorry if I talked too much and didn't listen to you"; "So sorry, I forgot"; "I'm sorry I was angry and took it out on you."

The Pope concludes like this: "Let us not be stingy about using these words, but keep repeating them, day after day. For certain silences are oppressive. In fact, the right words, spoken at the right time, daily protect and nurture love" (AL 133).□



**LIFE IS SIMPLE**

by Maria Chiara Bregolin Tezzon

Life is simple: what you give is what you get back. If you give with love you get back much more!

In a couple's relationship and in the life of the family these two assumptions can be experienced everyday if you have a sufficiently "focused" heart.

I believe what Pope Francis invites us to use in couple relationships is also transferable in the relationship we have with our children, at work and among friends... A society that can use words like, "please, thanks and sorry" more frequently, is a society that certainly lives in peace. And peace is not the absence of conflict or tension. But peace is understood as constant dialogue; whose aim is pursuing the common good.

So, in the family, as the first cell of society and as the domestic church, we should encourage the use of these words, beginning with ourselves, as adults. We then transfer these good habits to our little ones. We patiently teach them to wish, to say thank you and to say sorry. You might say: that's just outward show and you do it to educate them. **The form, in this case, is the substance.**

As parents, we like to explain to our children that kindness is such an important virtue and that whoever 'does' it, exerts a real charm on the recipient. And each of our three "fearsome" terms is in particular a word that can be defined as "magical."

And so, my Alex (6 years old) taught me that to apologize well you need to stop at the crossroad, listen to the words that hurt the



other and know how to express what good reasons led you to act in a certain way, as also to know how to give voice to the emotions that came into play following that action or word. Peter my other son (aged 9) so often turned up to ask for permission to do something today, in short, he looks at you with eyes that say: "can I?" in a defiant sort of way but with a sincere attitude to ask for what he wants. Anthony my eldest (11 years) the age at which he understands that what we do for him sometimes costs us some sacrifice and together with saying "thank you," he always adds, "I love you."

Kind words have a disruptive power: they help create a new world. They consist of solidarity and attentiveness. They prevent depression, panic attacks and a sense of loneliness in this society of censures, walls and selfishness.

These little words are equivalent to a simple gesture but have tremendous power to change the air in a room, the day in the life of a person and life in a family. □

**THIS ONE LIFE OF YOURS**

by Anastasia Dias

Ever had one of those times when you're stuck in a situation and had no idea how to get out; you know you're wrong and that's why you've been caught; nevertheless, you wish there was a narrow way through which you could escape, what do you do then? You hope for some kind of a miracle. You pray even though it's been ages since you last prayed.

Fortunately, you receive an unexpected answer to your prayers; someone who helps you get out of the situation. Very often there are people, often strangers, who come out of nowhere and help you; you're out of trouble within moments. You realize that maybe your prayers have been answered or probably a good deed you once did is what God has now decided to take into consideration. Whatever it is, you're out of trouble and the reason is because someone decided to bail you out.

I've also had innumerable, little experiences where I was helped by complete strangers. However, the story I'm about to share with you is not mine. It's

Peter Thompson's story, in his own words.

"In college, I was the most popular guy. Like most teenagers, I loved being a rebel. I would break rules, bunk classes and go to late-night parties. It was all fun and games until one night.

"That night, after a late party at my friend Kevin's house, he decided to take us out for a drive. Now, Kevin's parents were out of town. I had sneaked out of my house for his party.

"I sat in the backseat of the car. With music blaring, we sped past the traffic signal. Kevin, was completely drunk like everyone else. I knew there was something wrong and we would soon get into some kind of trouble. Anything could've happened that night but somehow, it didn't.





"Strangely, we were stopped midway. My sight was hazy. I remember seeing a police officer. I don't remember what happened next. All I knew was that the next morning we were at Kevin's house.

"When I woke, I thought I had had a bad dream. My friends were terribly hungover from the previous night. I heard a knock on the door.

"On opening the door, I saw the same police-officer. He told me that he'd come to check on us. He had seen us drunk-driving and stopped us. Apparently, he had made us get out of the car and sit in the police van. He got Kevin's address from his license and dropped us home. Kevin's car and license were still with him. He said he'd give it to him only if all of us went to the station together.

"When my friends woke up, I told them we'd had a visit. Quickly, we got ready to go to the station. We braced ourselves for the worst.

"At the station, the police officer called us into his office. He made the four of us sit down. He gave each of us four photos and told us to pass it on to the other once we had finished looking at it. They were terrifying images of people involved in

road accidents.

"He then said that he'd met with a horrible accident when he was young. Everyone except for him had lost their lives. He then added that he would give Kevin his car and license and let us all go, on one condition: We wouldn't repeat the same mistake again. He would be keeping an eye on all of us and if he noticed any suspicious activity we would be put into jail.

"After this incident, I began to change. No longer would I do things to fit in. I would discern whether it was the right thing to do.

I thought of the various possibilities that could've unfolded. The worst being that I could've died; or I could've been jailed. My parents wouldn't just be ashamed, they'd be heartbroken.

"But I was safe. Why? What was the reason? The reason was that a police-officer saw his past being repeated in a bunch of teenagers. He didn't want to see it happen again. So, what did he do? He decided he'd teach this young group a lesson, but in a way that they would always remember. Every photo he had shown was deeply etched in my mind. I would never ever repeat the mistake again.

"Life was too precious a gift to be compromised for anybody or anything. The moment I understood this I began to change and so did my life. I began using This one life of mine for my own wellbeing and that of others.'□

## AFTER SLEEPLESS NIGHTS, THE ENCOUNTER WITH THE RISEN IORD

by Don Chino Biscontin

**I**n the heart of Burgundy, not far from Auxerre, in a place called Vezelay, on the top of a large hill stands one of France's most majestic basilicas. It was begun in the Romanesque style on the tomb of St. Mary Magdalene, but it was completed with a Gothic apse and is still a pilgrimage destination.

The apse is preceded by a large semi dark atrium where the faithful gather for a penitential celebration which makes them worthy to enter that sacred space. Then the pilgrims pass from twilight to the triumph of light. That is the effect of the large Gothic windows in the apse. The architects wanted to give the impression of the appearance of the Risen Lord to Mary Magdalene in dazzling light.

**The New Testament speaks of Mary Magdalene (feast on July 22) 12 times.** One of these tells us that Mary of Magdala (this was the name of her village, on the Western shore of Lake Tiberias, famous for fishing and the preservation of fish (in salt) and that she was one of the women who followed Jesus and cared for him and his disciples. A couple of passages inform us that Jesus freed her from seven devils: several exegetes think it was some kind of a gynecological disease that caused legal impurity with all its consequences (that is the reason that in Vezelay there are beautiful headstones depicting her victory over the demons).

Other passages refer to the crucifixion of Jesus: Mary Magdalene

was beside Mary at the foot of the cross; and at the burial of the Crucified One. She was among the women who watched from afar the tomb where the body of Jesus had been laid and then she was the first to witness the apparition of the Risen Lord.

**In the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem there is a procession that takes place every day** during which the Franciscan fathers touch significant holy points three times. One of these refers to the apparition of the Lord to Mary Magdalene. The hymn that is sung says that Jesus appeared to many people after his resurrection, but he appeared first to the one he loved most.

It is worth rereading the Johannine account of this moving encounter: *"Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. And as she wept she bent down to look inside; she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She answered, 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have put him.' As she said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not recognize him. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?' She thought he was the gardener and so she answered him, 'Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and remove him.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary,' She turned and said to him,*

## SEEING WITHOUT BELIEVING

*Thomas meets the Risen Lord*

by Ian Pinto, sdb

*"Rabboni" – which is Hebrew for Master. (Jn. 20, 11-16)*

In that conversation, there is the full force of the affection that bound Jesus to Mary Magdalene; it was enough for her to hear her name pronounced to recognize Jesus and her reaction was (more accurately) "My Master."

Of course, without following what many have written about the relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene and despite authors knowing this, gullible people have taken the versions of novelists to be the truth.

**Misunderstandings about Mary Magdalene run throughout Christian history.** They have confused her with the sinner who, in the house of Simon the Pharisee, washes the feet of Jesus with her tears and wipes them with her hair and then sprinkles them with perfume. And so Mary Magdalene became the sinner that was converted by the Lord and as such was depicted in thousand upon thousand images throughout the history of art. As if that were not enough, they also confused her with Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, because the latter pours the precious scent of spikenard on the head of Jesus in the house of Simon the Leper.

No, it must be stated clearly: these are three different women. One is Mary Magdalene, the other is the sinner whose name we do not know, and still the other is Mary who in Bethany paid wrapped and fervent attention to Jesus.

**But whoever wants to understand Mary Magdalene must take into account what happened on the Friday of the Passion and on the Sunday of the Resurrection.**



She saw, with immense pain and grief Jesus murdered in a cruel manner and she shared in the heart-wrenching pain of Mary most Holy whom she assisted. With great pain she also saw Jesus being hastily buried without any respect or honour. She spent a sleepless night and saw the sunrise through her sobs as if nothing had changed and she had to endure that throughout Saturday because of the ban on carrying anything heavy on that day of rest and because of a second night without sleep, her mind was very confused.

And then the "first day" after the Sabbath, when it was still dark, unable to restrain herself any further she raced to the tomb with the spices and the perfumes because she had to give her master an honourable burial. And then the empty tomb was like a stab; had they profaned the body of the Lord? Finally the encounter with the Risen Jesus and the irrepressible joy she experienced which she announced to the frightened and the unbelieving apostles.

This is Saint Mary Magdalene in all her greatness as a disciple of Jesus. That was how she was my guide so many times when I was able to pray at the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre. □

If there is anyone in the Bible who knows something about a tag that sticks it is Thomas. Throughout the world he is known as 'Doubting Thomas'. Even non-Christians have heard about him and the title has found its way into English parlance. We've all heard someone use the phrase 'Doubting Thomas' to refer to another person. We also know how that phrase came into existence. Poor Thomas; all he did was ask for proof and he has been branded forever. Interestingly, nobody called him that at the time. It is only much later that scholars and the clergy bestowed on him the name, which carries with it a sense of shame.

In today's world, Thomas reaction would be regarded perfectly normal. We are in a scientifically inclined world, where evidence and proof is valued sometimes, and sadly so, even over the truth! It doesn't matter if it's true or not, do you have the evidence to back up your claim? That is what the legal system sounds like today. For this reason, you have people filing all sorts of suits and seeking personal benefits. It's quite silly when you come to think of it; but it has its pros and cons.

**I Will Follow You**

The Gospels don't tell us much about Thomas.

Even his call by Jesus is not recorded. All the Bible tells us about him is that he was called "Didymus," which means twin. Again why he was called Didymus is unknown. Did he have a real twin or was it some kind of nickname? We will never know. This much we do know about Thomas, he was a willing follower of Jesus. Surprisingly, he is left out completely by the Synoptic Gospels, i.e., Matthew, Mark and Luke. Only John makes mention of him. Every time he is mentioned, Thomas seems to display exceptional passion for Jesus and his mission.

The first time we hear about Thomas in the Gospel of John is before Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead (Jn 11:1 onwards). When Jesus received the news of Lazarus' death, he finished the work he had begun before making his way to Lazarus' house in Bethany. Before he did so, he spoke to his disciples and tried to tell them about the resurrection of the dead. However, the disciples were a bit worried about going back into



Judea since earlier the people had tried to stone Jesus (Jn 10:31-33, 11:8). At this point, Thomas speaks up saying, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (Jn 11:16). Clearly, the disciples weren't able to understand what Jesus was saying about the resurrection. They perceived him to be talking about dying, considering his desire to return to a place where his life was in danger. Thomas tries to settle the nerves of the group by encouraging them to accompany Jesus even to his death. His words carry the passion he shared for Jesus and his mission. He was ready to die with the Lord, if it ever came to that. Thus, we see that Thomas was deeply in love with the Lord. At this point, no other disciple shared his sentiment but nevertheless, they chose to follow Jesus.

The second time Thomas speaks is when Jesus is instructing the disciples about his going to the Father (Jn 14:1 onwards). Thomas innocently asks, "Lord, we don't know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Again, we see Thomas earnestly desiring to follow Jesus. He wants Jesus to simply point the way for him to walk. Here, again his passion and love for Jesus comes to the fore. Shortly before, Peter informs Jesus that he is ready to die on his behalf but Jesus brings him back to reality by telling him that he - when the time comes - will deny the Lord three times (Jn 13:38). When Thomas makes a similar statement, Jesus proclaims, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me" (Jn 14:6). Later, we see that Thomas did just that: he found the Father through Jesus. That is what made him a re-

nowned saint and missionary. His passion and love for Jesus and the Gospel message came across to all those he encountered, thereby making it possible for them to be converted.

### I Want to Believe

When Jesus appeared to the fearful disciples and interacted with them, Thomas was not with them (Jn 20:19-23). When he returned, he was welcomed with great joy and exultation. "We have seen the Lord" they declared to him. But Thomas was not easily convinced by their behaviour. He wanted to see for himself. Which lover would believe any story about their beloved? When parents are told that their son is missing in action, they cling on to hope and demand to see his body before putting their faith in what they have heard. From my experience, most lovers desire proof over hearsay. Therefore, it seems perfectly normal to me that Thomas asks for proof of Jesus' resurrection. He doesn't doubt for the sake of it, or to make a point. He doubts because he wants to believe... and because he loves. It isn't fair to Thomas that we continue to refer to him as the 'doubter'. Rather, I think it's high time we refer to him as the 'lover'. Thomas' doubt and subsequent faith has been immortalized by the Church in the Holy Eucharist. We are all sinners but we love the Lord and therefore we come to the Eucharist. There, in the Holy Eucharist, the Lord clears our doubts and gives us the strength to become witnesses of His love and mercy. Let every Eucharist become for us an opportunity to declare, "We have seen the Lord." □

## Witnesses in & for Our Times



### ST. FREDERICK ( + 838) (JULY 18)

It is said that Frederick was born around 780 in Friesland and was the grandson of the Frisian king Radboud. According to Church records, he died (was martyred) on July 18, 838 but other sources give the dates as between 834 and 838. In any case it is certain that he was murdered. Frederick was taught at Utrecht by the clergy, including Bishop Ricfried. After completing his studies he was ordained priest and put in charge of converting the remaining heathens in the northern areas outside the diocese. The English chronicler William of Malmesbury calls him *Fridericus Cridiodunus* (that is, from Crediton in Devon, the birthplace of St. Boniface, but there is no reliable evidence for this; it is just possible that he was English perhaps from Wessex, although it is much more likely that he was a Frisian. Whatever his country of origin, he became a bishop and took part in the Council of Magonza in 829.

According to tradition, Frederick became involved in the quarrels between the emperor



Louis the Pious, and his sons who resented the position of the empress Judith, their stepmother - it may be that Louis' first wife was still alive. They accused her of immorality, and Frederick felt obliged

to remonstrate with her. She resented his assumption that the accusations were true and became his implacable enemy. It is known that he preached at Walcheren and together with St. Odulfus in Stavoren and its surroundings. He was known for his piety and erudition but also became unpopular with the people of Walcheren, who objected to the evangelizing missions sent out by the bishop and, in particular, to any attempts to regularise their marriage customs; they were so difficult to deal with that Frederick went there as a missionary. After the death of Ricfried in 815/816, Frederick was chosen as bishop of Utrecht.

He maintained a correspondence with Rabanus Maurus of Fulda and about 834 he received a letter from the learned Abbot, who sent him a treatise on the book of Joshua and also presented a treatise on St. Matthew's Gospel, expressing his great deference for Bishop Frederick and also elaborately praised him.

He was murdered on 18 July 838. An eleventh-century Life and William of Malmesbury claim that the murderers were working for Judith, but this seems very unlikely and quite out of character. It is more likely that the murderers were disaffected inhabitants of Walcheren. The story goes on that, on July 18,

838, after St. Frederick had celebrated Mass and was about to make his thanksgiving, he was stabbed by two assassins. He died in a few minutes, reciting that verse of Psalm 144, "I will praise the Lord in the land of the living". The eleventh century author of his life says that these assassins were employed by the Empress Judith, who could not pardon the liberty he had taken to reprove her sins, and was incited thereto by her husband.

William of Malmesbury and others repeat the same; but later writers, such as Baronius and Mabillon, think that they were rather sent by some of the inhabitants of Walcheren. And this seems the more likely opinion: for no contemporary makes the charge against Judith and it is not at all in consonance with the attitude of Louis towards episcopal authority and Christian conduct. Frederick was buried in the church of the Most Holy Saviour, Utrecht.

St. Frederick composed a hymn to the Trinity that was used for many centuries in the Low Countries. His cult owed a great deal to a poem in his honour by Rabanus Maurus (c. 780-856; 4 Feb), abbot of Fulda, archbishop of Mainz, and one of the foremost theologians of his age; he also dedicated his commentary in the book of Joshua to Frederick. □

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## MY DAY IN COURT

*Author Unknown*

After living a "decent" life my time on earth came to an end. The first thing I remember is sitting on a bench in the waiting room of what I thought to be a courthouse. The doors opened

and I was instructed to come in and have a seat by the defence table. As I looked around I saw the "prosecutor," he was a villainous looking gent who snarled, as he stared at me. He definitely was

the most evil person I have ever seen. I sat down and looked to my left and there sat my lawyer, kind and gentle looking man whose appearance seemed very familiar to me. The corner door flew open and there appeared the judge in full flowing robes. He commanded an awesome presence as he moved across the room, and I couldn't take my eyes off him. As he took his seat behind the bench, he said "Let us begin."

The prosecutor rose and said "My name is Satan, and I am here to show you why this man belongs in hell." He proceeded to tell of lies that I told, things that I stole and in the past when I cheated others. Satan told of other horrible perversions that were once in my life, and the more he spoke the further down in my seat I sank. I was so embarrassed that I couldn't look at anyone, even my own lawyer, as the evil told of sins that even I had completely forgotten about.

As upset as I was at Satan for telling all these things about me, I was equally upset at my representative who sat there silently not offering any form of defence at all. I know I had been guilty of those things, but I had done some good in my life - couldn't that at least equal out part of the harm I'd done? Satan finished with a fury and said "This man belongs in hell. He is guilty of all that I have charged and there is not a person who can prove otherwise. Justice will finally be served this day."

When it was his turn, my lawyer first asked if he might approach the bench. The judge allowed this over the strong objection of Satan and beckoned him to come forward. As he got up and

started walking I was able to see him now in his full splendour and majesty. Now I realised why he seemed so familiar. This was Jesus representing me; my lord and my Saviour. He stopped at the bench and softly said to the judge, "Hi Dad," and then He turned to address the court.

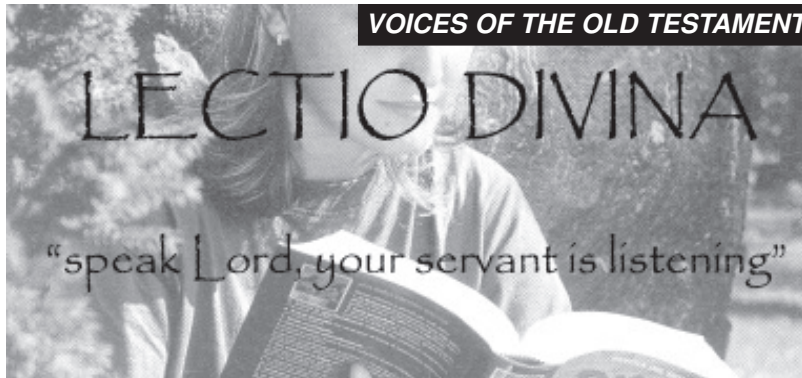
## Paid in Full

"Satan was correct in saying that this man had sinned. I won't deny any of these allegations. And yes the wages of sin is death and this man deserves to be punished." Jesus took a deep breath and turned to His Father with outstretched arms and proclaimed, "However, I died on the cross so that this person might have eternal life, and he has accepted Me as his Saviour, so he is mine." My lord continued with His name is written in the book of life and no one can snatch him from Me."

As Jesus sat down, He quietly paused, looked at his Father and said, "There is nothing else that needs to be done, I've done it all."

The Judge lifted His mighty hand and slammed the gavel down, and the following words bellowed from His lips - "This man is free - the penalty for him has already been paid in full, case dismissed." As my Lord led me away I could hear Satan ranting and raving, "I won't give up, I'll win the next one." I asked Jesus as He gave me my instructions where to go next, "Have you ever lost a case?"

Christ lovingly smiled and said, "Everyone that has come to me and asked Me to represent them has received the same verdict as you, Paid in Full." □



## THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

by Carlo Broccardo

**T**owards the end of July. On the 31<sup>st</sup> of the month we will remember St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, born in Spain in the late 1400s and died in Rome in 1556; while on the Sunday previous to that, the 26<sup>th</sup> we will hear in the first reading the dream that the young Solomon had at Gibeon, a village seven miles from Jerusalem, just under 10 km. What do Ignatius of Loyola and Solomon have in common, having lived two thousand five hundred years and several thousand kilometres apart from each other?

Let's begin with St. Ignatius. Among his many achievements he has written the famous *Spiritual Exercises* in which he gives us very useful guidelines on how to discern, that is, on how to distinguish what is good and what is not. Those who know St. Ignatius well will forgive me for having simplified his intuition so much, but I was interested in highlighting only what is central: to be able to do the will of God one must first know it! And it's not always easy



to know how to choose well or to take the right path. Who among us has never experienced any trouble in this regard?

Let's move to Jerusalem shortly after 1000BC. The great king David is succeeded by his son

Solomon. It was not an easy succession, as the first book of the Kings tells us, because when David became old, more than one pretender to the throne came forward; in the end, thanks to the maneuvers of David's wife (Bathsheba) and the prophet Nathan, Solomon is anointed king.

But it was not an easy succession because David was a great king; the first true king of Israel; the man who had defeated the enemies of Israel, unified the tribes of the north and those of the south (always at loggerheads with each other) and established the capital of the kingdom of Jerusalem. David would remain "the" king, the best, the ideal, the one loved by God. Best of luck to those who must take his place! It is all too simple to make comparisons and to say that the predecessor was better...

Solomon was aware of this. That night in Gibeon, while he was asleep he had a dream and God spoke to him and he conversed with God and made his request (if he dreams he seemed to say that he was asleep: yet he spoke to God; he listened and God answered) Solomon clearly stated: "Although I am but a child who does not know how to undertake anything in the meantime, your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen - a people so numerous that they can neither be numbered or counted." It was not so much a matter of registration. Solomon was already married to the daughter of the pharaoh and he was already anointed king. He was not inexperienced in court life. Yet he feels not up to the task that lies ahead of him. He

feels inadequate, like Moses who says: "I am not a good speaker..." (Ex 4:10); or like Jeremiah, who protects himself from God's request by saying: "I cannot speak, I am only a youth" (Jer. 1:6).

God gives Solomon the world's most attractive proposition: "Ask whatever you want and I will give it to you." Ask for anything you want and you will have it! How do you reply to such a question? He could have asked for a long life or military power to defeat all his enemies or even immeasurable wealth. He instead asked for just one thing: "Give your servant therefore an understanding heart." If you look closely at the Hebrew text there is a more concrete expression: Solomon asks for "a heart that listens," a heart that knows how to listen. In other words, he asks God for the ability to listen to God, to enable him to hear, "so that he can distinguish right from wrong."

That's where Ignatius and Solomon meet. No one was ever born an expert, no one knows everything (apart from the sages; but it is better to have nothing to work with...) Blessed are those who are humble, who know how to listen to God and to others, to life and to history, because all of us have a vocation that is larger than ourselves. What parent can say, ever since their first child, that they were capable of being parents? Or what priest in his first parish is already a perfect pastor? What religious who enters a monastery or community can say s/he already knows how to pray? It can be a good exercise to repeat every day as a kind of mantra: Lord, give me a heart that listens; make me a person capable of listening. □



# Quiet Spaces

## BEATITUDES IN REVERSE

*Morning Meditation in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae - June 12, 2017*

If we simply leave the door of our heart “a bit” ajar, “God manages to enter,” saving us from joining the ranks of the “unmerciful.” This is the antidote for those who lack mercy and who practice the Beatitudes “in reverse.” During Mass Pope Francis shared this idea and warned against the temptation of “self-referential narcissism,” the very opposite of that Christian “otherness” which is both “a gift and a service.”

Referring to the day’s first reading from the Second Letter to the Corinthians (1:1-7), the Holy Father immediately noted that within just 19 lines of text, “Saint Paul speaks eight times of comfort, of allowing ourselves to be comforted so that we may comfort others.” The word ‘comfort,’ thus, “occurs eight times within 19 lines: it’s too strong; he is trying to tell us something.” Therefore, Pope Francis took this as “an opportunity, an occasion to reflect on comfort,” to ask: “what is the comfort which Paul speaks about?” The Pontiff noted that “first of all, we must see that comforting is not autonomous; it is not something closed in on itself”.

In fact, he said, “the experience of comforting, which is a spiritual experience, always needs ‘otherness’ in order to be complete; no one can comfort himself, no one”. And “whoever tries to do so, ends up looking in the mirror: he looks in the mirror, seeking to mask himself, to appear” a certain way. “He is comforted by these closed things that prevent him from growing, and the air which he breathes is the air of self-referential narcissism.” However, this is a “mask” of “comfort which does not allow growth; it is not comfort because it is closed; it lacks ‘otherness,’ that sharing with an ‘other.’”

“In the Gospel we find many people like this, for example, the doctors of the law are full of their own sufficiency”. They are “closed, and this is ‘their comfort’ in quotation marks.” The Pope made explicit reference to the rich man “who lived from one party to the next,” and thus, felt “he was comforted.” However, this type of attitude is best expressed by the words of the prayer of the Pharisee and the publican before the altar: “God, I thank thee that I am not like other men.” In other words, he “was looking at himself in the mirror, looking at his soul ‘masked’ with ideologies, and he was thanking the Lord.” Jesus himself “shows us the possibility” of the existence of “these people who will never attain fullness with this lifestyle but at best will arrive at being ‘puffed-up’, in other words, vanity.”

For “comfort” to be true, to be Christian, it needs “otherness,” an ‘other.’ This, Pope Francis explained, is because “true comfort is received.” For this reason “Paul began with that blessing: ‘Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.’” And “it is precisely the Lord; it is God who com-

forts us; it is God who gives us this gift: to us with our heart open, he comes and gives it to us.” This is “the ‘otherness’ which allows true comfort to grow; and the true comfort of the soul also matures into another ‘otherness’, so that we may comfort others.” Therefore, that “comfort is a state of passage from the gift received to the service rendered”, and thus, “true comforting has this twofold ‘otherness’: it is both a gift and a service”.

Thus, the Holy Father reiterated, “if I allow the Lord’s comfort to enter as a gift, it is because I need to be comforted: I am needy.” In fact, in order “to be comforted it is necessary to recognize being needy: only thus will the Lord come, comforting us and giving us the mission to comfort others”. Certainly, Pope Francis recognized, “it is not easy to have a heart that is open to receive the gift and to serve others, the twofold ‘otherness’ that makes comforting possible”.

“It is Jesus himself who explains what I have to do in order to keep my heart open,” the Pope explained. “An open heart is a happy heart and in the Gospel we have heard who are the happy ones, who are the blessed: the poor.” Thus, “the heart opens with an attitude of poverty, poverty of the spirit: those who know how to weep, the meek, meekness of heart; those who hunger for justice, who fight for justice; those who are merciful, who have mercy towards others; the pure of heart; the peacemakers and those who are persecuted for justice, for love of justice.” And “in this way the heart opens and the Lord comes with his gift of comfort and the mission to comfort others.”

However, there are also those who “have a closed heart: they are unhappy because the gift of comfort cannot enter and cannot be given to others.” They do not follow the Beatitudes and “they feel rich in spirit, or rather, self-sufficient”. These are the people “who have no need to weep because they feel they are just; those violent ones who do not know what meekness is – who never forgive and who never have the need to forgive because they do not feel the need to be forgiven; those unclean of heart; those workers of war, not of peace; and those who are never criticized or persecuted for fighting for justice, because they do not care about the injustices done to other people: these people are closed”.

Therefore, considering these ‘beatitudes in reverse’, the Holy Father suggested that it would be “good for us to think today” about “how my heart is: is it open? Do I know how to receive the gift of comfort, do I ask it of the Lord, and then do I know how to give it to others as a gift of the Lord and as my service?” Let us remember that God “only asks that the door of our hearts be open, at least a bit, so that he can then manage to find a way to enter.” □

*(by L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly ed. in English, n. 27, 7 July 2017)*

## THE OLD-FASHIONED MOM

By Pierluigi Menato (TA/ID)

**I**t's useless, mom, you're too old-fashioned. These are different times, different ideas, different ways of looking at life! That was how the three girls spoke to their mother that day; the twins with a tinge of imperitence and the youngest who wholeheartedly agreeing with them.

The twins had just turned twenty and they thought it gave them a sense of superiority in the presence of their younger sister who had just turned eighteen.

"Me? Old-fashioned?" In the end, I was born in your own century, I too am from this period and I feel energetic, athletic and full of life no less than you but I don't approve of certain things: for instance, that attitude you call free; I would say, unprepared and I believe, that is how it will be viewed a hundred years from now and then that ostentation of masculinity is totally out of place. And those frayed jeans that make you look like some female soldiers with lips in such turgid colours and those long black nails. I don't think they say much for a woman who wants to consider herself modern."

"In the meantime," Clare briskly jumped up, "with our raucous demeanour, our manners you think we've lost our minds, don't you? Actually, we have made quite an impression and we're the envy of our friends; and before you know it you will be receiving proposals for marriage."

"But from whom?" asked mom with a slight hesitation in

her voice.

"From Hubert, the engineer, the most prospective bachelor in town with pots of money; haven't you noticed how he likes to visit us? Doesn't he say anything when he's here almost every day; his constant concern and the flowers he sends us? He's madly in love with one of us and since he has decided to get married within the year, it is more than certain that you will soon see him seriously wanting to propose to one of us."

"But which of you is he in love with?" Asked the mother surprised, looking them straight in the eye.

"Who knows? He hasn't told us," they replied nonchalantly, each one sure that she was the one; perhaps because of the darkest nails, the lowest and most frayed jeans...the freest language.

"Who will it be..." asked the mother with a sigh, "but don't you think there's quite a gap between you and him? The engineer is handsome but fifteen years between you and he seems to be quite a gap to me."

"And what are you trying to say, mom? He's so rich; imagine what a good life we'll have and we'll travel with him, and the clothes, the parties and a palatial house..."

"Yes, but do you love him?" I believe that in marriage it is essential that there be affection, esteem, devotion, and respect, isn't that true?"

"There you go again, mom, with your old-fashioned ideas" they interrupted her briskly.

"That's not the way we speak about things anymore. Love comes later. It's all about getting on..."

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At this point in the conversation the maid came to say Hubert had come visiting.

The engineer entered; he was handsome, tall, refined and with a frank expression on his face. His grey eyes were clear and lively. He bowed to kiss their mother's hand and sat down easily as he stared at the girls with a slightly ironic and amused expression.

"We were just talking about nothing but love" the youngest girl jumped up and down with glee as her mother blushed like a child.

But soon the topic changed and they talked and laughed and argued for about an hour after which the engineer took his leave and the air seemed to be filled with a kind of warmth and affection he seemed to have left behind.

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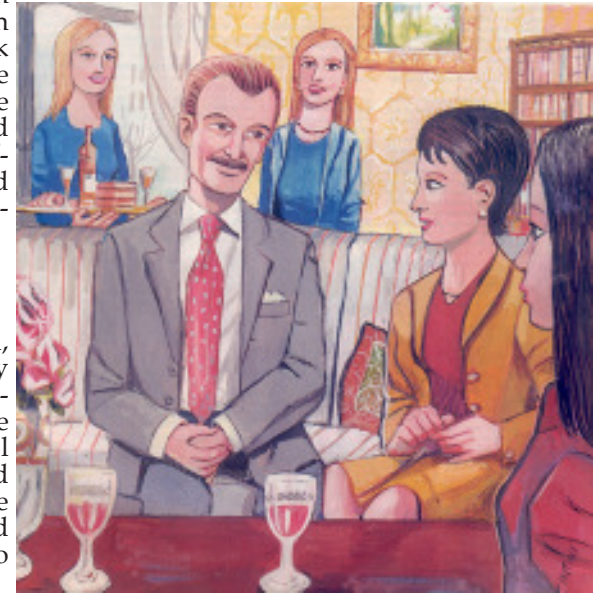
"If I get married, I will immediately buy a yacht," exclaimed the youngest one full of joy. She seemed to think that the engineer had taken a shine to her.

"Don't say a yacht, at least say a motorboat..." warned the mother, looking up from her work.

"Why should he marry you? You're the youngest and you can wait for another couple of years, it's up to us first," protested the twins.

Their mother listened in silence; she wasn't happy to hear them speak so casually about such a great emotion. It is about two beings bound together for life. She had a feeling that they certainly didn't understand the meaning of esteem and mutual trust. Those terms seemed to have been profaned by the way the three girls as they treated those emotions so flippantly.

The mother reproached herself for not having been able to bring up her girls better; for not having seriously kept an eye on them. But what could she, such a young



mother do? She seemed more like an elder sister to them; she was widowed with three girls and she felt lost, without any support for their future.

She sighed and went back to what she was doing. She couldn't remain without doing anything; she was always busy with something or other: she sewed, painted, played the piano, read and filled her days with a thousand different activities. She knew how to devote herself to cooking and in the morning she went to a museum or an exhibition. She enjoyed the sight of a beautiful countryside. These days she drove the car but didn't like riding the bicycle anymore.

That day too, she was busy reading a good book when a letter arrived for her.

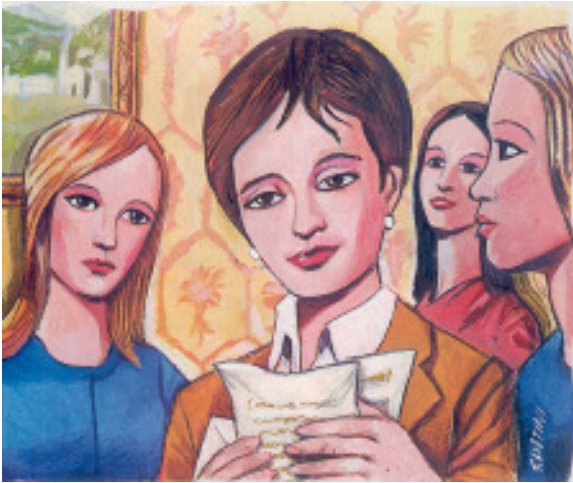
"It's from Hubert, the engineer," she said looking at the name on the envelope. Her daughters were tense and anxious as they came running to her. She calmly put down her book and read it and blushed. She tried to put away the letter in her pocket but her daughters were all over her:

"What does it say? Is there anything about me, or me?" They were anxious.

"No, no, it doesn't say anything important."

"Then show it to us, mom!"

"But it's nothing, really noth-



ing."  
"Then why aren't you showing it to us?"

And since the mother held the letter in her hand in her pocket; joking and laughing, they struggled with her until they tore it from her grasp and ran into the garden to read it.

The mother, still blushing had dropped the book to her knees and looked out of the window, far away.

The letter said:

"My dear and loving friend, what I am about to write, I would have liked to tell you in person, sitting beside you while you worked or read; but - would you believe it? - I didn't have the courage. I myself command hundreds of men and yet before you I would not dare to speak my mind as your refusal might depress me immensely.

"I have decided to resign myself to remaining eternally single. This useless and selfish life shrinks my heart with pain and remorse. I have always wanted a wife, good, beautiful

and healthy woman with modern ideas and principles; one who is active, noble and refined; a woman for today who loves work in all its forms and other activities, but who also knows how to devote herself to the arts, is passionate about music, poetry, painting and yet does not disdain the poetry of her own home; a strong and courageous woman who has not lost her

femininity and you are this someone and I wish to have the honour to ask for her hand.

"I would be a father to your daughters so that they grow up good; being guided by a man who, by loving and understanding them so much would make them like you.

"Would you be so good as to say 'yes'? I am waiting for your reply...□

## THE WHOLE STORY

He or she may have gone... How many times have we not heard this lament? And the words, even the warmest and most affectionate, always sound a little hollow in the face of the suffering resulting from a break up.

He or she has gone... Some of you have lived through this experience and you have watched the person you wanted to spend the rest of your life with walk away. That it happened 18, 30 or 50 years ago does not matter! The ache is the same: you remain alone not knowing why, humanly hoping that he/she will return; which is often nothing more than an illusion. Then the memories become regrets, and then before long they take on the taste of bitter remorse.

But life goes on. After a period of suppression, suffering then has the opportunity to express itself and the time comes to take control of the situation. Two attitudes seem very basic at this point: to understand first of all what happened. The breakup was rarely sudden or unexpected. Most often it was preceded by several small cracks. And only the analysis of what went wrong in the relationship or what you felt was something that never helped your personal growth. Don't forget that as they say, if you have not understood the past you are condemned to repeat it.

It then seems necessary to be able to look with a certain detachment at everything that brought about that breakup, however deplorable it was. But it's hard. It is clear that it is easier to be complacent with regret about the past and remain playing the victim.

But this detachment is necessary to go ahead with other plans, without which life quickly loses its zest. It is never good to just remain anchored in one's past. The courage to begin again must be found. It is only then that forgiveness becomes possible. To forgive is not to forget...

And no one is ready to forget a dose of suffering that resulted from a rupture. To forgive is not to stop oneself or the other in the past. It is time to allow a new departure. The path of forgiveness is something not just demanding it is also liberating. In any case, this is the message of the Gospel. □

## FIORETTI OF DON BOSCO - 18

by Michele Molineris

### 49. Fault and Pardon

One evening in August of 1853, around six o'clock, Don Bosco was standing near the outer gate of the Oratory, engaging in pleasant conversation with some of his boys, when one of them suddenly shouted: "Watch out! Here comes a maniac. I think he's an assassin!" A man in his shirt sleeves came rushing toward Don Bosco. He was wielding a butcher knife and yelling: "I want Don Bosco! I want Don Bosco!" Don Bosco recognized the man as a former tenant in the Pinardi house whom he had often befriended. His name was Andreis, and he was now living in the Bellezza building. At first the boys panicked and scattered through the playground and the meadows fronting the Oratory. Among those who fled was the cleric, Felix Reviglio. His flight was providential, for the assassin mistook him for Don Bosco and chased him. By the time he realized his mistake and turned back toward the gate, Don Bosco had rushed to the safety of his room, after having first locked the small iron gate at the foot of the stairs. When the thug discovered that the gate was locked, began to pound it with a large stone and shake it violently in a vain attempt to force it open. He stood there at the foot of the stairs for more than three hours, like a tiger in ambush waiting for its prey. He appeared to be a maniac, but it was later ascertained that this was merely an

act. He kept shouting at Don Bosco to open the gate, saying that he merely wanted to speak with him. Meanwhile, the boys had recovered from their fright and gathered in a group. Their blood boiled at the sight of this man threatening their benefactor and father. Each of them impulsively grabbed a stick, a stone, or some other improvised weapon, planning to rush the attacker and give him the thrashing he clearly deserved. But Don Bosco, fearing that some of the boys might be injured in the scuffle, called to them from the balcony and forbade them to go near the miscreant.

No one could feel secure with that madman on the premises. Mamma Margaret was very much alarmed for the safety of her son and that of the boys. Not knowing what to do, she dispatched a messenger to summon the police but, incredible as it may seem, no one showed up until nine-thirty that evening when two policemen finally came, handcuffed that maniac, and led him away. Don Bosco was thus saved from this potential danger, but the unhurried response of the police did not speak well of those in charge of law enforcement in those days. And as if this slipshod performance on the part of the police were not enough to give every law-abiding person cause for concern, the chief of police had the audacity to send an officer to Don Bosco on the following day to ask him whether he would withdraw the charges against his assailant. Don Bosco replied that as a Christian and a priest he naturally forgave the aggression and other offenses as well, but that as a citizen and a director of a school he

demanded in the name of the law that the public authorities provide more efficient protection for him and household. It hardly seems believable, but on that same day the chief of police released the assailant. That very evening Andreis was again lurking in the vicinity of the Oratory, waiting for Don Bosco to emerge so that he might finally carry out his murderous design. (EBM IV 488ff)

### 50. Be careful of those who are very kind (1854)

One Sunday afternoon in January, 1854, two elegantly dressed men went up to Don Bosco's room and were received with the usual courtesy. The playground was deserted because the boys were in church singing. Seeing the two men, John Cagliero became suspicious and hid himself in a little room adjoining Don Bosco's, standing guard near the interconnecting door. At first he could not understand very well what was being said, although the discussion was being conducted in loud tones. It sounded as if Don Bosco were refusing to agree to some proposal they had made. The two visitors then raised their voices and Cagliero heard them say: "After all, what does it matter to you whether we preach this doctrine or that? Why should you oppose us?"

Don Bosco answered: "It is my duty to defend the truth and my holy Faith with all my strength!"

"So you won't agree to stop publishing *The Catholic Readings*?"

"No!" replied Don Bosco resolutely.

It was then that they began to

threaten him with two pistols, saying: "Either you do as we tell you, or you're a dead man!"

"Go ahead!" Don Bosco replied calmly, looking intently at them with great dignity. Just then a loud bang was heard. The two men hurriedly thrust the pistols back into their pockets. Cagliero, unable to grasp the last few words which had been pronounced in a low voice and fearing for Don Bosco's safety had pounded on the door with all his strength and then had rushed to call Buzzetti who came running at once. As they were about to break into Don Bosco's room, the two men emerged, completely flustered. Don Bosco was following them humbly, biretta in hand, bidding them good-bye calmly and courteously. This was the second time that Cagliero was privileged to save Don Bosco's life. (EBM IV, 493)

### 51. Extreme sickness, extreme remedies

"Despite these continual threats," Father Reviglio told us, "Don Bosco remained unperturbed. In fact, he even rejoiced when, for God's glory, he received insults and threats from his enemies. He never carried any weapon in self-defence or made use of his unusual physical strength to repel assaults. With his stamina he could easily have handled even two powerful men. Occasionally, finding himself cornered, he resorted to his nimbleness to escape harm." We are indebted to Mr. Patrick Spinardi for the details of one such incident:

"One night Don Bosco was on his way home from Moncalieri, walking along the edge of the



A painting of Mamma Margaret when she was 67 (1855). It was done by Rollini. The portrait is kept in the Don Bosco Museum in Turin.

road. About midway on the journey, almost below Cavoretto, he noticed a man with a long, thick cudgel following him. At that moment the man started to run. When he was about to overtake Don Bosco and deal him a staggering blow, Don Bosco swiftly stepped to one side and gave him a vigorous push that sent him sprawling into a deep ditch thick with wild vegetation. Then Don Bosco quickened his pace

to catch up with some people far ahead down the road.

Don Bosco's serenity during such encounters was remarkable but it did not lessen Mamma Margaret's anxiety about his safety. She often thanked God for having thwarted attacks on his life! Isolated as the Oratory was in the midst of orchards, fields and meadows without the protection of a fence or wall enclosing it on all sides, she deemed it prudent to have a small iron gate installed at the foot of the stairs leading to the balcony of Don Bosco's room. As a further precaution, she frequently would assign a husky boy to stand guard there, especially at night. She even asked her other son Joseph to come from Castel-nuovo to protect Don Bosco from his implacable enemies. When darkness fell and he had not yet returned home from visiting the sick or performing some other work of mercy, she would send some of the older boys to meet him and escort him back to the Oratory. She seemed to have a sixth sense in anticipating the dangers that threatened her beloved son. (EBM IV, 493-494) □



Weapons used in a series of attempts on the life of Don Bosco

## SALESIAN SAINTS

### MARIA TRONCATTI 1883 - 1969 FMA - BLESSED

On August 25, 1969, in Sucua (Ecuador), the small plane that was carrying Sr. Maria Troncatti to the city crashed a few minutes after take-off, on the edge of that forest which was her home for almost half a century, the "homeland of her heart," the place of her tireless self-gift among the "Shuar" tribe. Sister Maria experienced her last take off and the one that took her to Heaven! She was 86 years old and every one of those years was spent as a gift of love. She wrote: I am happier every day in my missionary vocation!"

She was born in Corteno Golgi (Brescia, Italy) on February 16, 1883 into a large family and grew up among happy, industrious and caring siblings, with warm and very affectionate parents. She was assiduous in studying her catechism and the sacraments. The teenage Maria developed a profound sense of the Christian life and was open to considering a religious vocation. The *Salesian Bulletin* came to Corteno and Maria, brimming over with Christian values began to consider a religious vocation. In obedience to her father and her parish priest she waited till she came of age before applying for admission to the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. She made her first profession in 1908 at Nizza Monferrato. During the First



World War (1915-1918) Sister Maria attended nursing courses in Varazze and worked as a Red Cross nurse in the military hospital; an experience that would turn out to be most valuable over the course of a long missionary life in the Amazon region of Ecuador.

Following a violent storm Maria promised Our Lady that if she survived she would go to the missions. Our Lady heard her prayer and so Sister Maria asked Mother General to send her to the lepers. After long years of waiting her request to go to the missions was granted. Her Mother General, Sr. Catherine Daghero sent her in 1922 to the missions of Ecuador from where she would never return to her homeland. She stayed in Chunchi for three years. Then accompanied by the missionary bishop Monsignor Comin and a small expedition, Sister Maria and two other sisters went to the Amazon rainforest. Their mission field

was the land of the Shuar Indians in the south east of Ecuador. As soon as Sister Maria arrived in Mendez she won the esteem of the people, operating the daughter of the chief with a penknife; the girl had been injured by a bullet. The nuns settled permanently in Macas, a settler village; a collection of Shuar huts, and the sisters in a hut on a hill in the centre. As Don Bosco was her father and teacher, Sister Maria became their mother, and for the next 44 years she would be called *Madrecita*.

She continued to work with her sisters in the difficult work of evangelization in the midst of risks of all kinds not excluding those caused by forest animals, swirling rivers to be crossed on fragile rope bridges or on the shoulders of Indians. Macas, Sevilla Don Bosco, Sucua are some of the 'miracles' still flourishing due to the hard work of Sister Maria Troncatti. She was a nurse, surgeon, orthopedic, dentist, anesthesiologist and above all a catechist and evangelizer fully resourceful with her faith, patience and fraternal love. As a smallpox epidemic spread Sister Maria moved from one place to another to fight the disease and to help and support the people. In the Equatorial forest she proclaimed and witnessed the love of the Father to all the people. She was "the *Madrecita*" always solicitous in meeting not only those who were sick but all those in need of help and hope. From the simple, poor clinic she built a real hospital, preparing nurses herself. She was a "doctor" for the body and the spirit: while she healed or distributed medicines she counselled and evangelized. With her maternal

patience she listened, built communion between peoples and educated the indigenous people and the settlers in forgiveness. "One look at the Crucifix gives me life and courage to go on." It was this certainty that sustained her life. The generous missionary nature of Sister Maria was expressed in her life which was given for the evangelization and the human and social promotion of the Shuar population in the Amazonian forest of Ecuador. All her work was punctuated by the demands of her fidelity to the love of God. In his name or that of Our Lady she made present the mercy of God to all the needy in soul and body. In her dedication there was also her strong attachment to the Church which was expressed through her concern for God's ministers: always ready to assist them in their difficult mission.

Her remains lie in Sucua in the province of Morona (Ecuador). One of the missionaries of the time, Father Giovanni Vigna left us this testimony about Sister Maria Troncatti: "She was the very embodiment of evangelical simplicity and subtlety. With what exquisite motherliness she conquered hearts! She found a solution to every problem in the light of the facts, it was always the best. She never forgot that she was dealing with fragile human beings who were sinners. I have seen her treat human nature in all its aspects, even the most miserable. She treated them with a deference and kindness that came to her naturally and spontaneously. What surprises me is that in everything she remained exquisitely a woman. I dare say more, a virgin and most of all, a mother." □



## FROM HER 'FIAT' TO HER 'MAGNIFICAT'

by Sr. Maria Ko Ha Fong, FMA

**L**uke's story of the episodes of the Annunciation and the visitation are linked together. "The angel left her" and Mary "set out in haste" (Lk 1, 38, 39). Christians down the ages with wonderful insight have preserved the sequence of these two events. In the prayer the *Hail Mary*, we praise Mary with the angel's words: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you," and these are followed up by the words of Elizabeth: "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb." After Mary accepts the divine "invitation" she gets up and goes out to others. While she walks the winding hilly roads of Judea, she's also taking an inner journey of faith where she moves for her docile acceptance: "let it happen" to the joyful explosion of the *Magnificat*; from being visited by God to being the personification of God visiting others. Mary combines sublime contemplation on the mystery to a very concrete action in an experience of service; blending the great wonderment at what God has done in her and her concrete relation to the world and its his-

tory. The eagerness with which she makes her journey to Ain Karim show Mary's active, enterprising, creative and determined manner. Her haste can be compared to the missionary Church who, immediately after Pentecost, anointed by the Holy Spirit, sets out to spread the Good News to the ends of the earth. Paul knew well this haste and described it thus: "It's the love of Christ that urges us" (2 Cor. 5:14).

### Mary Reveals God's Style

Climbing through the Judean hills, Mary senses that she is not alone, the Son of God is concealed within her. Luke describes this journey in terms that are so similar to the transfer of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem narrated in 2 Samuel 6, 2-11. John leaps in Elizabeth's womb, this recalls the great joy that David experienced in the presence of the ark and Elizabeth's words with which she greets Mary closely remind us of the words of the king: "How is it possible that the Ark of the Lord comes to me?" The angel's greeting at

Nazareth "the Lord is *with* you," that Mary struggles with, now becomes something she really experiences and is convinced of. Mary, the mother of God-with-us, is now the new Ark of the Covenant, the new dwelling place of God, a new divine presence among humankind, another reason for our joy.

As she walks those inhospitable roads and reaches the other home, Mary inaugurates God's new way of service, of self-abasement and solidarity with those in need. Through her God-made-flesh becomes the God who enters the human fabric and also permeates the sphere of daily life. Salvation takes on a domestic tone. "I must come to your house today," "Today, salvation has come to this house," (Luke, 19:5.9): is what Jesus will say very shortly, when he meets Zacchaeus. This reality is somehow anticipated in Mary who brings joy and hope to the people. She walks from Galilee to Judea, along the same stretch of road that Jesus will later walk. She walks in haste through the hill country and the fervent Bible reader will be reminded of that prophetic text of Isaiah which speaks of the feet of the messenger of good news. "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news" (Is. 52:7). The good news that Mary brings sparks off contagious joy, making the child in an old woman's womb leap for joy. The children who are born and the elderly who are reaching the fullness of their lives come together to praise and rejoice in the same God who is the "lover of life"

(Wis. 11:26).

### All through her life Mary will spread joy

Throughout her life Mary will continue to spread and increase joy everywhere. It is joy that fills her, the joy that she remembers from the greeting of the angel "Rejoice Mary!" and this joy is made more intimate and profound when she said: "let it happen to me!" At the birth of Jesus this joy will spread to the shepherds of Bethlehem through the proclamation of the angel, "I bring you news of great joy, which will be to all the people" (Lk. 2:10). Bringing Jesus to the temple, Mary will once more make old Simeon and the prophetess Anna thrill with joy. Joy won't be lacking at Cana, thanks to Mary's intercession with her Son. The words of the psalmist could be applied to Mary, the bearer of Good news and the mother of the God of Joy: "You crown the year with your goodness [...] they all shout and sing for joy." (Ps 65, 12.13)

From the "*fiat*" (let it happen) to the "*Magnificat*" become the two symbols of the two points in the journey that every Christian makes of his/her pilgrimage of faith, from accepting God's plan to the enjoyment its fulfillment, through a gradual "ascent." This ascent is demonstrated in service, living generously for others everyday, serving those in need, making friends in the community and becoming a missionary to bring Jesus to the homes of others, announcing the good news with joy and so arousing the joy of salvation in youngsters who are open to life. □

## NEWSBITS

**BETHANY, WEST BANK** – Their convent is surrounded on three sides by the Israeli separation wall, but the Comboni Sisters told visiting bishops they are trying to build bridges of peace rather than walls.

"We are here to bring people together," Comboni Sister Alicia Vacas, convent superior, told bishops from Europe and North America participating in the weeklong Holy Land Coordination.

The convent, which serves as a spiritual retreat and includes the St. Mary Kindergarten, was founded in 1966 and has gone through numerous political changes since its founding on what was then Jordanian territory. But in 2004, following the outbreak of the second Palestinian uprising, the sisters were cut off from half of the population they serve by the Israeli barrier, a series of cement slabs, barbed wire fences and security roads snaking across part of the West Bank.

Two sisters live in a Christian housing project just on the other side of the wall to maintain a presence and to serve the few Christian families who have remained in the project.

A small "door" was initially opened in the wall to allow the children of the kindergarten to be passed through to the convent, but that was eventually blocked, and parents on the other side of the wall needed to take two buses, stand in line at a checkpoint, then walk 30 minutes to get to the kindergarten. It became too arduous a journey, and parents sought



alternative kindergartens for their children.

The wall and military towers loom above the convent on all three sides, including over the kindergarten playground, which has been covered by a fireproof roof because of the Molotov cocktails thrown over the wall by Palestinian demonstrators, said Vacas.

She said the wall near the convent is easier to jump than other spots, and Palestinians jump the barrier to reach family, jobs or health care on the other side, which is under Israeli control. This often makes the convent a flashpoint for confrontations.

"This creates a very difficult situation; soldiers come by here twice a day, and any time of the day people jump over the wall to get over to the other side," said Vacas. "But we are missionaries, and missionaries are normally on the border. It is not by chance that we are here. We are here to attempt to make 'holes' in the wall. Our sadness is that the soldiers are the only experience the children have of Israelis."

The responsibility of keeping the children safe under such circumstances is very great, she added. □

# IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

## Stiffnecked Spine

Vicar: "Amid all your troubles Mrs. Abbott, I am pleased to see that your gratitude to Providence does not fail."

"No sir, rheumatism is bad," she said, "but I thank Heaven I still have a back to have it in."

## Seeing is Believing

"Why don't you give in?" asked one tramp to another, as they stood before the gate. "That dog's all right. Don't you see he's wagging his tail?"

"Sure I do; but he's growling too, and I don't know which end to believe."

## Missed Fortune

There had been a dreadful flood in Missouri. One man, who had lost nearly everything he possessed including a lot of poultry, was sitting on the roof of his house, as it floated along. He was gazing out over the vast stretch of water, a neighbour in a boat approached and called out: "Hello Bill! Did all your fowls wash away?"

"Yes, but the ducks can swim. I reckon they're alright."

"Peach-trees gone, too eh?"

"Well, they said the crop would be a failure anyhow."

"I see the water is way above your windows."

"That's alright, Sam. Them windows needed washing mighty badly, anyhow."

## Take What You Get

Two women were discussing domestic troubles on a bus the other day.

"I'm worried about the mice in my house. Last week they ate up the roast-beef and yesterday they finished the cake."

"Why don't you get some rat biscuits?" suggested her friend.

"Don't be daft! If they won't eat what we eat, they can starve!"

## What's In a Name?

First Student: Great Scott! I forgot who wrote 'Ivanhoe.'

Second Student: "I'll tell you if you can tell me who the dickens wrote the 'Tale of Two Cities.'"

## The Professional Patient

Mr. Teller was in poor health and continually changing physicians. At one time he called in a young man just beginning to practice in the town, and told him all his ailments, remarking that he had symptoms of heart trouble of a serious nature.

"Not necessarily," said the young doctor.

This did not please the patient and in his irritation he looked accusingly at the other, sternly remarking:

"It isn't for a young physician like you, just out of college, to disagree with an old and experienced invalid like me, sir!"

## A Stern View

"Did you hear," asked the senior, "about our cross eyed professor getting fired?"

"No," replied the innocent freshman. "Why was he let out?"

"Because he couldn't control his pupils." □

## A STORY ABOUT THE POWER OF PRAYER

Patricia Walsh

Of the three Divine Virtues, The Bible tells us that the greatest of these is Charity. No one would argue with that, but Canon Sheehan, that great story-teller adds a further dimension to the virtue of Charity.

He tells a story about a young Italian girl who, many years ago, lived in Ravenna with her father. It so happened that the great poet Dante also, at one time, lived in Ravenna, so the little girl was called Beatrice, in memory of Dante's beloved.

Very often, she would hear arguments between her father and her uncle as to the fate of Dante's soul, and so every evening when she went to the Church to pray for her dead mother, she would go and kneel before a favourite Madonna and pray also for the soul of the dead poet. "God", she said, "may hear the prayers of a child for it is the mightiest soul he has made for centuries."

One evening in the church little Bice, as she was nicknamed, fell asleep on the altar steps. She dreamt of a great sea and across that sea came a tiny boat with the

soul of a woman standing in the prow. When she came near she told Bice that she was the spirit of Beatrice and had been sent for the little girl because only she had the keys to unlock the place where Dante was detained. Bice got into the boat and together they went across the shining water until they came to a gloomy tavern. There, behind a great iron gate, sat the poet and his face had a look of gloom and despair as he looked out from behind bars that seemed "red with fire or the rust of eternity."

"Go forward," said the spirit of Beatrice. "Open the gate and liberate our beloved."

Bice finds two keys at her belt. One made of gold is marked Charity. It unlocks the bolt but the gate will not open. The second key is silver. It is marked prayer, and as soon as she fits this to the gate the great barrier swings back and Dante is set free. You may say this is just a pretty little story. Perhaps it is. But a story, nevertheless, from the pen of a man who found "sermons in stones and good in everything." A man indeed who might easily have coined the phrase "more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." □

## LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

Two years ago in the month of February, my elder sister suffered a mild stroke. It affected her speech and her right leg movement slightly. I prayed the *Hail Mary* continuously and there was a big improvement in her condition. As said in the *Memorare* - "that never was it known that anyone who fled to her protection, was left unaided." Thank you Mother Mary for always being there in my life.

Hilda Fernandes



## 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 anger, stress, special need or temptation, is a sure means to obtain Our Lady's help.*

Thank you Mother Mary for assisting me in securing a job through the faithful recitation of the Three Hail Marys, it is a miracle. *Mark*

I thank you Mother Mary, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary and through the recitation of the Three Hail Marys for the very great graces I received: for curing my husband Frederick Bartleman from brain cancer and healing him completely from aspiration and all his sickness. He is now able to walk and live a normal life.

*Mednora Bartleman, Australia*

Thank you dear Mother Mary for peace and reconciliation in our son's family and for the blessing and the gift of a baby girl to our friends. Please continue to bless, protect and help us.

*Your Grateful Children in Perth, Australia*

My son's and daughter's family were on a tour by car on the outskirts of California and while on tour they averted a fatal accident. As they were driving on a narrow road, the car coming in the opposite direction looked menacing as there was no proper judgment. My children stopped their car and in the nick of time the other car driver realised his mistake and braked. Nevertheless the door of our car, a front light and part of the bonnet were smashed but my children escaped miraculously. I had started the novena of the Three Hail Marys and I offer great thanks to Our Lady whose hand I clearly saw in saving my children's life. *C. Pinto, Mumbai*

I have another miracle to testify to with regard to my devotion to the Three Hail Marys. I was healed of an ear infection which caused a radiating headache for almost a month. I was cured of it, all thanks to Mother Mary. *Elvis Pink*

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

I sincerely thank the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Our Lady Help of Christians and the Saints, for a good sonography report of my abdomen and pelvis too. I am also grateful to them for every grace, blessing, good health and favour granted to me and my family. May they continue to bless and protect us always.

*Juliet John, Mumbai*

My grateful thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco, Dominic Savio and all the other saints for showers of blessings received and granted to Angela.

*Maria Fernandes, Goa*

Thank you to the Holy Trinity and Mama Mary for the successful eye operation of my mother, for securing a good percentage for my nephew and for many other other favours. *Miss Flory Fernandes, Mumbai*  
Thank you Jesus, Mother Mary and Don Bosco for all the favours granted. For the safe delivery of my daughter. Keep showering your blessings on my family always. Give us good health and keep us in your loving care. *C. Joachim, Ahmedabad*

## THANKS TO DEAR ST. DOMINIC SAVIO



Thank you Jesus, Mary Help of Christians, Dominic Savio and Don Bosco for all the miracles which have taken place in our lives. Thank you for saving my daughter, son-in-law and her family and for all the graces received through your mercy and grace to come out of a difficult court case. Thank you for helping my son to obtain his green card and secure a job. Thank you for saving my husband's life many times from near death situations. Thank you for all the countless blessings and favours received over the years. I express my sincere gratitude and pray that you continue to bless my family and protect all my loved ones.

*Martha M. Miranda, Bahrain*

My most sincere thanks to Baby Jesus, and little St. Dominic Savio and St. Gerard for giving my daughter good health. *A Devotee*  
Many, many thanks to St. Dominic Savio for the gift of a grandson.

*Hemlata D'Souza, Mira Road*

Our grateful thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Our Lady of Velankani and St. Dominic Savio for the many favours received, especially for curing the wound on my ankle which took quite some time to heal after the surgery because of varicose veins. Now I am perfectly alright and can walk without any difficulty. *Gladys Menezes, Aurangabad*  
I was to undergo a surgery on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2019 but due to a snag in the OT it was postponed to 31<sup>st</sup>, the feast of St. John Bosco. I put myself into his hands and the surgery was a success and the reports were clear. Thank you Mother Mary, St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for all the favours received. *A Grateful Devotee*

Sincere thanks to Mother Mary, St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio for blessing Derrick and Rosaura with a baby boy and continue to keep their family under your care and protection.

*Michelle Viegas, Mumbai*

## APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

JULY 2020

*Our Families*

*We pray that today's families may be accompanied with love, respect and guidance.*

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### **MARY WAS THERE**

My transfer orders came from New Delhi and I was relieved from that post the very same day. I left immediately for Bangalore via Madras. I was directed to board the train which I immediately did after my breakfast after buying a packet of cigarettes. I was worried about my future. At the next station I was joined by a nun. She asked me where I was going: *Millers Road* I said. I pulled out the packet of cigarettes when she advised me not to and to throw the packet out of the window. I did so. "Come with me I will take you to Millers Road, my vehicle is at the station. She dropped me off at my office gate and drove away. My worries were all over. Yes, she was "Mother Mary in disguise." There I met my Welfare Commissioner who advised me to take up my new position at Hospet and all arrangements were made for lodging too. I was welcomed by the staff there. *E.P. D'Souza, Goa*

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