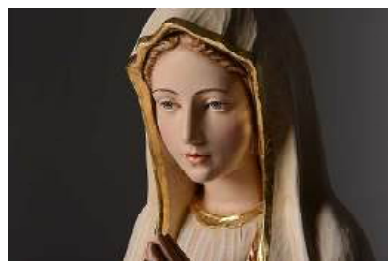


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Hail, O Star of the ocean
*God's own Mother blest,
 ever sinless Virgin,
 gate of heavenly rest.*

Taking that sweet Ave,
*which from Gabriel came,
 peace confirm within us,
 changing Eve's name.*

Break the sinners' fetters,
*make our blindness day,
 Chase all evils from us,
 for all blessings pray.*

Show thyself a Mother,
*may the Word divine
 born for us thine Infant
 hear our prayers through thine.*

Virgin all excelling,
*mildest of the mild,
 free from guilt preserve us
 meek and undefiled.*

Keep our life all spotless,
*make our way secure
 till we find in Jesus,
 joy for evermore.*

Praise to God the Father,
*honor to the Son,
 in the Holy Spirit,
 be the glory one. Amen.*

From The Editor's Desk

CAN AND SHOULD I CHANGE?

"To live is to change," said Cardinal Newman, "and to have lived fully is to have changed often." However, his contemporary, the great Russian novelist Dostoevsky, remarked that "taking a new step is what people fear most." This presents an interesting contrast of views. While change is essential to life, it often comes at a price that we are reluctant to pay. It forms another battleground of hope. Nevertheless, we are beginning to recognize significant patterns of transformation within ourselves, acknowledging that growth continues throughout our lives.

Gone are the days when only adolescents faced challenging transitions. The shift from childhood to adulthood was once seen as the only major crisis, but this perspective has evolved. Today, the pressures of a rapidly changing world ignite deeper internal challenges. Events like the "midlife crisis" are now recognized as natural and vital to our development. Embracing these transitions can lead to profound growth, making it essential for us to support one another through these critical periods of evolution. Painful transitions are a natural part of life, yet they can be incredibly challenging. People often feel stuck and reluctant to let go of strategies that once worked for them.

The initial chapters of Mark's Gospel offer a gentle introduction filled with healing and good news. True discipleship requires us to surrender conventional views of power and significance and embrace the cross alongside Jesus.

Conversion and change are essential to our Christian identity and extend beyond the spiritual realm. While we can't expect a precise "map" of life's changes, recognizable patterns do exist as we journey forward. This moment of clarity is invaluable, but it won't last forever. In our forties and fifties, we often face uncertainties about God and our life commitments, feeling lost and weary. This can resemble a second adolescence—a natural stage of life. Yet, what seems burdensome can lead to profound growth, allowing us to cultivate compassion and resilience while deepening our understanding of God's mysteries.

Experts agree that later years often bring a surprising sense of serenity, enhancing our relationships and faith. Grandparents typically approach their challenging grandchildren with calmness, having navigated similar experiences themselves. This serenity reflects a transformative freedom as we learn to surrender to God. Instead of regretting the past or lamenting the present, we can fill our time with gratitude and recognize the goodness around us. Ultimately, God has instilled in us a desire to grow with age, and our hope flourishes when we embrace life's invitations. As Louis Evely pointed out, the most significant change often calls us to discover our freedom before God. Embrace this journey; it holds the promise of transformation.

Fr. Ian Douulton, sdb

LOSING A CHILD BUT WHERE WAS GOD?

by Bishop Giampaolo Dianin

It is impossible to overlook a painful reality that many married couples face: the loss of a child, whether during pregnancy or shortly after birth.

Amoris Laetitia invites us to reflect on the significance of marriage and the blessing of children. The fifth chapter of Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation focuses on the themes of welcoming children and the joy of parenthood, while also addressing the role of the extended family, particularly in the context of adoption. One important aspect that is often overlooked is the loss of a child, whether during pregnancy or shortly after birth. Many couples experience miscarriages, and unfortunately, serious illnesses can also take a newborn's life soon after delivery.

I have personally encountered this situation, having accompanied couples who have faced the heart-wrenching reality of losing a newborn. Tragically, it happened to me as well, and later, I experienced it a second time.

Luca and Giulia (not their real names) already had a son, but after losing their second son to a serious illness, they had thought long and hard about whether it was right to open themselves to life again, when the doctors had told them that it could happen again. But sometimes, while

we are thinking, life appears on the horizon, and for these young newlyweds, it had to be welcomed, with all the risks involved. I share with you a letter I wrote to these dear friends of mine on the day of the funeral of little Teresa, who died shortly after her birth.

"Dearest Luca and Giulia, allow me to tiptoe in with a few lines to tell you of the closeness, affection and esteem I have for you and to accompany Teresa on the day when you thank the Lord for having been able to welcome her, to love her from the moment of her conception, to accompany her and now to entrust her to the God of life.

We met some time ago, and you shared your journey as a couple and parents who strive to live out your faith. You faced challenges that required both intelligence and discernment while remaining open to divine guidance. Thank you for your heartfelt testimony and your commitment to valuing



life. You consistently prioritize life as a gift rather than viewing it as a problem. As you have learned, faith is not a guarantee against the unexpected events life may bring.

Many of us, especially those of us who believe, often wonder why difficult things happen and seek answers. God, the creator of the heavens and the earth, intended for life and history to unfold through human agency. He created man and woman, granting them the invaluable gift of freedom, which we often take for granted. As a result, our planet's history is filled with both wonderful moments and hardships, including pandemics, earthquakes, wars, injustices, births, illnesses, and even death. God is always by our side, as He has promised. You have experienced this presence, yet He does not always intervene in our lives as we wish. When He does intervene, it is often in unexpected ways that can be difficult for us to comprehend: "Why does He act in some situations and not in others?"

Death serves as a reminder of our fundamental fragility, continually highlighting the absurdity of pursuing earthly happiness as if it were everlasting. It reminds us that we are creatures reliant on grace, not creators of our own destinies; even when we feel powerful, we are inherently vulnerable, and even in moments of greatness, we remain small. Death, our ultimate adversary, always claims victory because we all face it. However, for us as Christians, this victory is only apparent; it can be transcended when death becomes an act of love, transforming into a gift of life. This is exemplified by

Jesus, who turned an act of injustice into the greatest act of love — one that saved us and imbues even death with meaning.

I see so much love in your story. Thus, Teresa's death should be viewed not as a wall, but as a threshold; it is not an end, but a beginning; it is not a tomb, but a birthing room. As Jesus stated emphatically, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live; he shall never die."

Allow me to assert: God is responsible for Teresa's death, just as He is for every other tragic death. It is true that He is the "guilty one" because, by creating us, He allowed for suffering, affliction, pain, and human wickedness. God bears guilt, just as every father and mother does by bringing a child into the world, inevitably exposing that child to both the joys and trials of life. However, the same God who is guilty of allowing all this is also the God who, through Jesus, transformed death into an act of love — just as you, dear Luca and Giulia, have done.

My greeting to Teresa is filled with love: yours, that of all those who have come before you and those who are close to you, and that of your parents. In this land, Teresa has known only the welcoming embrace of Giulia; she has experienced the most beautiful reality. Although it may seem limited, it would have been lovely for her to learn many other wonderful things. But, dear Luca and Giulia, she will bring you her appreciation for the beauty of the land as she knew in her mother's womb. I look forward to meeting you all." □

WHY BELIEVE? AND WHY HOPE?

Monica Comali

There is an innate spirituality within each individual, characterized by an intimate tension towards transcendence. This spirituality is original and distinct from any cultural representation or religious practice. It represents humanity's attempt to engage with the mystery of life in its entirety, to appreciate its beauty, and to avoid being overwhelmed by its complexities. Throughout history, people have found themselves surrounded by the mysteries of existence, which both fascinate and distress them.

The term "faith" primarily refers to religious faith, which involves accepting a revelation and a set of doctrines. However, it also has a broader meaning related to

trust and reliance on life and its mysteries.

We can also consider hope to be a legitimate response to the unknown—a concept echoed by mystics in the idea of "*docta ignorantia*" and by Socrates with his assertion, "I know that I do not know." This highlights our confrontation with a reality that is often too vast for us to comprehend.

Spirituality is a universal dimension that encompasses desire, transcendence, trust, and hope.

The theologian Hans Küng (1928-2021), in a text that, although dated and entitled "Eternal Life?" deserves renewed attention in our current era of change. He emphasizes that "...I decide to trust



Spirituality is that dimension common to all, which has to do with the dimension of desire, transcendence, trust, hope.



Hans Küng

or distrust; my decision of faith involves whether I want to accept a final absence of foundation and meaning, or a foundation and original purpose for all things, or a Creator God who brings everything to completion. This act of confidence is reasonable and must be justified with rigorous intellectual honesty. This engages with the Great Mystery of Reality. My decision ultimately leads me to this Mystery; therefore, it will never be purely a decision of reason; rather, it will reflect my entire being as a person. It is a risk of faith, akin to that of love." This perspective on reality, along with trust and hope regarding the meaning of life and death, reminds me of Viktor Frankl's (1905-1997) Logotherapy. Frankl highlighted how the spiritual aspect of humanity can permeate all levels of a person, activating what we now refer to as 'resilience'—a concept he called 'the spirit's strength of resistance'—in the face of life's challenges.

In this view, hope and faith are genuine virtues and passions rather than mere illusions. The comfort they provide goes beyond simple consolation; it is linked to a realistic understanding of oneself, acknowledging our

limitations, desires, and the illusions of power and control we hold. Psychoanalyst Massimo Recalcati argues that we enter into a coherent relationship with our desires when we actively pursue what we want, rather than passively waiting for it or demanding it without effort. When desire is authentic—metaphorically 'coming from the stars' and 'reaching for the stars'—it becomes an inner law guiding us towards consistent choices in life and attitude. Do you desire love? Then love! Do you desire joy? Smile and spread happiness to others!

Küng states: "...He will not turn the earth into hell, but will make visible, even now, a fragment of God's coming kingdom. Those who hold onto hope in eternal life amidst the conflicts of our world, without overestimating themselves or yielding to despair, have not chosen the easier path.

In conclusion, I believe that everyone can respond to this radical call to believe and hope, either before or beyond (not against) any religious doctrine. It is about believing, hoping, and aspiring to embody attitudes toward life amidst the incompleteness that characterizes each and every person's experience." □



Viktor Frankl

REASONS TO BELIEVE - 6

by Franco Molinari

Mussolini the atheist

More than eighty years ago, in Italy, Christians were a persecuted minority, often marginalized and associated with being backward.

At the age of twenty, Mussolini found himself in Switzerland as a deserter from military service in Italy. One evening, during a debate with the Protestant pastor Tagliatela, he dramatically threw a watch onto the table and declared, "If God exists, I give Him five minutes to electrocute this enemy of His." It remains uncertain whether he later abandoned his atheism; perhaps the providential misfortune of July 25, 1943, marked a turning point for him.

During this time, scientists were generally resistant to religious sentiments. Anti-religious fervour reached such heights that Contardo Ferrini, a law professor at the University of Pavia, faced a severe reprimand from the university rector for participating in a religious procession being one of the canopy pole-bearers. However, the situation has since reversed.

While scientists haven't turned into devout followers, they no longer express outrageous contempt for faith. Believers are no longer viewed as primitive or mentally

inferior.

The remarkable discoveries regarding the infinitely large and the infinitely small provoke deep reflection. A child asks, "How did the Earth come into being?" The astrophysicist replies, "It was a colossal explosion from which the forces of the Big Bang emerged."

The child then presses on, "And how did those forces come into being?" Physicist Antonino



Zichichi made a noteworthy statement during a lecture in Bologna: "If an atom were as big as this microphone, I would be as large as the universe."

The mystery of the infinitely small and infinitely large is so magnificent and complex that a scientist confessed in a public debate, "It is less complicated to believe in the virginity of the Virgin Mary than to understand the results of our investigations."

The honest and forthright scholar recognizes that he cannot explain boundless suffering and does not know why people are born, die, or what lies beyond the limits of this existence. At the same time, he realizes there is something subtle and spiritual that cannot be dissected or magnified, even by the most powerful microscopes.

A Nobel Prize winner like Carlo



Rubbia has declared the hypothesis of an ordering mind to be highly plausible. In the 1960s, an American magazine featured a brightly coloured cover with the bold slogan: "God is dead."

Scientists have differing opinions. It is not within their purview to explore the realm of the Transcendent. However, their intricate mathematical calculations demonstrate that the extraordinary perfection of the cosmos cannot be attributed to chance or random encounters of matter over millennia.

Einstein, one of the greatest minds of the 20th century, wrote, "I do not know whether God created the world. Perhaps it was created by chance. But who, if not God, made it by chance?"

The absurdity of death

Stefano, 33, a strong athlete and dedicated worker, collapsed on the tennis court on the afternoon of April 2, 1985. It was a sunny day. His mother, Silvana, who had been widowed for twenty years, and his sister, Raffaella, could only weep.

Why did he have to die at the age of 33, like Christ being crucified?

Medical science was unable to revive his agile and robust body. Reason tells us that such a death is absurd. Even faith falters.

A recent book published by Mondadori is titled *Life Beyond Death*. It features interviews conducted by a psychologist with people who were clinically dead and then revived. Their experiences can be summarized as follows: "After death, we walked toward a great light. The return to earthly life was harrowing."

This kind of experience may

provide us with a glimmer of hope, however faint, in this overwhelming darkness.

But why must one be taken so young?

The ancient book of Wisdom, offers insights in Chapter VI: "Longevity is not merely persistence but being dear to God. Those who are dear to God may die young, as He withdraws them from the world of sinners.

Stephen entered the realm of light; we are no longer surrounded by selfishness and evil.

Another perspective on this is provided by the prophet Elisha in Chapter 17 of the First Book of Kings. A mother loses her child, and Elisha lays himself on the boy three times before restoring him to her: 'Here is your son.'

Faith, bolstered by the promise of the Almighty and loving Father, reassures: 'Behold your son. Your son lives. Your eyes may not see him, but he sees you.'

On Sunday morning, the pious women went to Jesus' sepulchre and found it empty. Two angels advised them: 'Do not look here for Him who is among the living.'"

Christianity is not a religion of death but of life. For two centuries, rationalism has sought to undermine the resurrection of Christ. However, archaeological discoveries provide us with substantial confirmations of this event.

Recently, a necropolis of rock-cut tombs was uncovered near Christ's tomb, offering another piece of evidence. Additionally, early records from devoted women are among the earliest accounts of the resurrection. If the evangelists had been inventing stories, they would likely have



portrayed the risen Jesus appearing to everyone except women, who at the time were often viewed with suspicion. But why, then, did Christ not appear to his adversaries?

The answer is that if the Gospels were fabricated, one might expect the authors to include a triumphant appearance to key figures like Annas and Caiaphas in their legendary narrative. Instead, the evangelists present themselves as honest chroniclers. They do not shy away from presenting the truth, even when it casts a negative light on Peter, the pillar of the Church, who denies knowing Jesus before a servant girl.

Lastly, if Christ had not risen, one would struggle to explain the birth of the Church. The non-believing philosopher Machovec acknowledged this in his book "*Jesus for Atheists*." □

VIRTUES THAT POPE FRANCIS RECOMMENDS

Prudence

A prudent person is creative; they reason, evaluate, and strive to understand the complexities of reality without being overwhelmed by emotions, laziness, pressure, or illusions. In a world dominated by appearances, superficial thoughts, and the banality of good and evil, the ancient lesson of prudence deserves to be revisited. A prudent individual values the lessons of the past, not out of fear for the future, but because they understand that tradition carries a wealth of wisdom. Furthermore, a prudent person also possesses foresight. Once a goal has been set, it is essential to gather all the necessary means to achieve it.

Patience

There is no better testament to the love of Jesus than encountering a patient Christian. Consider the countless mothers and fathers, workers, doctors, nurses, and the sick who, each day, silently grace the world with their holy patience. As Scripture states, "Patience is better than the strength of a hero" (Proverbs 16:32). However, let's be honest: we often struggle with patience. In our daily lives, we are all prone to impatience. Patience is like an essential vitamin that we need, to keep going. Yet, we instinctively react with impatience, often

responding to evil with evil. It can be incredibly challenging to remain calm, control our instincts, and manage our responses. This is especially true when trying to defuse conflicts and disagreements in our families, workplaces, or Christian communities. More often than not, our immediate reactions betray our inability to be patient.

Justice

The virtue of justice seeks to regulate relationships between people with equity, aiming to treat everyone with dignity in society. Justice is essential for the harmonious coexistence of individuals. It applies not only in the courtroom but also in our daily lives. A just person is upright, genuine, and straightforward; they do not wear masks but present themselves as they are and speak the truth. The phrase "thank you" often comes to their lips, as they recognize that no matter how generous we may strive to be, we always remain indebted to our neighbours. Our ability to love is rooted in the fact that we have also been loved.

Fortitude

Fortitude is often considered the most 'combative' of the virtues. While prudence, the first cardinal virtue, is primarily associ-



ated with reason and justice is linked to will, fortitude is commonly connected by scholastic authors to what antiquity referred to as the 'irascible appetite.' Ancient thinkers did not envision a person devoid of passions; such a person would be as lifeless as a stone. A person devoid of courage, who fails to direct their strength toward the good and avoids engaging with others, is ultimately unhelpful.

Temperance

Temperance, as its Latin equivalent suggests, is the virtue of finding the right measure. A temperate person knows how to choose their words carefully and weighs their responses thoughtfully. They are mindful, ensuring that a moment of anger does not ruin relationships and friendships that can often be easily repaired. This is especially important in family life, where inhibitions tend to be lower, and we risk failing to manage tensions, irritations, and anger effectively. There are appropriate times for both communication and silence, and both require careful consideration and balance. This principle applies to many situations, including interactions with others.

Faith

Faith is the virtue that defines a Christian. Being a Christian is not primarily about accepting a culture or its values, but rather about fostering and cherishing a personal bond with God—a connection between myself and the loving face of Jesus. It is this bond that truly makes us Christians.

Hope

Hope is a virtue against which we often struggle. When we falter in the face of our sins, we tend to forget that God is merciful and greater than our hearts. Remember this, brothers and sisters: God forgives everything; God always forgives. When God's love ceases to be an eternal flame in our hearts, we may hesitate to make decisions that commit us for a lifetime.

Love

In ancient Christianity, various Greek words described love, but 'agape,' often translated as 'charity,' became central. Christians experience all types of love—falling in love, experiencing friendship, and sharing a universal affection for humanity. However, the deepest love comes from God, enabling us to love Him and our neighbors as He loves them.

Through Christ, we are inspired to act in remarkable ways: caring for the poor, embracing the unlovable, and reaching out to those who may not return our love or might even be ungrateful. This divine love calls us to love even our enemies, challenging us to be beacons of compassion in a world that needs it.

Humility

Humility stands in stark contrast to pride, which is often considered one of the most destructive vices. While pride and arrogance inflate our sense of self-importance, humility helps us recognize our true nature: we are remarkable yet limited beings with both strengths and weaknesses. Humility serves as the foundation for all virtues. □

GERMAINE COUSIN

June 15

Ian Pinto, sdb

A Cinderella Story?

I could hardly believe it when I read her biography; *Catholic Insight*, a Canadian Catholic website published a brief article on her in June 2024 under the title - 'A True Cinderella.' Germaine was a young French girl who lived a fairy-tale life, except for the happy ending. There were no missing glass slipper or handsome prince or a glamorous ball in her life but there was trouble and torment, isolation and discrimination.

Germaine was born into a simple family in Pibrac, a rustic village about 10 miles from the bustling city of Toulouse, in the south of France. The poor parents were troubled to discover that their little girl was born with a deformity. The little girl had a deformed hand that would challenge her to live a full life. As if this was not challenging enough, the baby developed scrofula, which is a bacterial infection that affects the lymph nodes and causes painful pustules to form, usually around the neck area. This disease also happens to be a deforming agent as it gives rise to lumps and boils on the neck owing to the swelling of the lymph nodes. The little Germaine was born into pain and she carried her cross right from infancy.

The sad story gets sadder as the young girl loses her primary caregiver, her mother, while only a few years old. Thereafter, her father



marries a second time. Her stepmother comes into the house with children of her own and is disgusted at the sight of the ailing Germaine. Under the pretext of preventing the spread of the disease, which was thought to be infectious at the time, her stepmother pressurized her father to isolate Germaine from the family. Considering that the family was poor, isolating a person meant putting them out of the house; this is what Germaine's father finally does: he puts his daughter out into the stable. This becomes Germaine's home for the rest of her short life. She works as a

shepherdess during the day and retires to the stable to rest on a bed of vine branches at night. Food would be left for her by the stable, as one would leave food in a trough for the animals. Germaine had been reduced to the status of a hired hand, a servant who could be considered to be a little better than the animals she cared for.

Doesn't this account bring to mind the story of the Prodigal Son? He was reduced, although under very different circumstances, to the state of destitution to the point of living like an animal until he finds the courage to return to his father and beg for pardon. Even as he returned, he prepared himself to live out his days as a hired hand who lived a more dignified life than the one he lived at present. There was no such hope for Germaine. She did not have a rich father to run to. She was more akin to Cinderella who was tormented and discriminated in her own house. Unlike Cinderella, Germaine didn't even have the luxury of living like a servant; she was cast away like a diseased animal, left to fend for herself.

Anyone can be Holy

The terrible treatment she received did not turn Germaine into a bitter person. She accepted her situation and tried to make lemonade with the lemons life sent her way. I think this is an amazing attitude, even more so, since she was a youngster. Many people get hung up on the negativity that comes their way. I wish to speak for myself; I often find myself spoiling my mood by the negativity that others send my way. Often, the negativity is not nearly as

much as I make it out to be in my mind. This cesspool of pessimistic eddies, does nothing but damage my mental and physical well-being.

Accepting one's situation is the first step toward healing, revival and conversion. Once you have accepted your situation, you then need to take proactive steps to do things that help you find meaning in your existence. For Germaine, this took the form of caring for farm animals. She spent the majority of her day pasturing sheep and goats for the landlords. To this activity, she brought an admirable sense of God's presence. Her biographies do not succeed in offering any explanation for this, and so one can only surmise that this was a supernatural gift. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* concurs that 'Faith is a supernatural gift from God that needs the interior help of the Holy Spirit' (CCC #179). Since it is a gift, faith can grow in any person. One needn't come from a pious family in order to be a pious person, although the family environment is a great help. Faith is a personal gift and thus, while one person may have it another might not, even in the same family.

Germaine had a precocious faith and a proclivity for spirituality. She turned her isolation into an opportunity to cultivate a deep relationship with God. The time spent in nature brought her face-to-face with the work of the Creator and she developed the ability to find the Creator in His creation. Thus, though she was seemingly alone, Germaine was never truly alone. She learned to converse with God and was able to hear His voice. She had great

respect for the Holy Eucharist and would begin her day at Church. Every time the Church bell rang for prayer, Germaine knelt where she was and prayed. Even the animals seemed to understand that the ringing of the bell meant that their shepherdess would take some time to meet the Good Shepherd. There were occasions when she would fix her staff in the ground and leave her flocks in the pasture land while she went to attend Mass. Never was a single animal hurt or lost. In fact, such was the mantle of Divine Protection over her that no harm ever came to her or to her flocks even though she lived and pastured them close to the forest.

The rejection by her own family, allowed Germaine to learn humility, acceptance, tolerance and forgiveness. She lived in dire poverty but embraced it with the willingness of a Franciscan. She practically lived on bread and water. As if this were not enough, she practiced further austerities and offered her sufferings for the conversion of heretics who were spreading their influence in the countryside. She was known to have a great love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and for the Blessed Mother. It was observed that her piety increased around the time of every Marian feast. She prayed the rosary as diligently as a nun and encouraged devotion among children in the village. While there were people who derided her for her piety, all naysayers turned into admirers as they witnessed an increasing number of supernatural occurrences associated with her. On several occasions, villagers noticed the swollen stream part to

allow her to walk to Church without getting her frock wet!

Towards the end of her life, good sense prevailed in her father and he invited her back into the house despite the protests of his wife. However, Germaine refused stating that she would like to continue practicing austerity. This did not last much longer as one summer morning in 1601, her father discovered her lifeless body in the stable when he went in search of her. She was 22 years old. Yet, she had a reputation for holiness.

She was buried in front of the pulpit of her parish Church. Again, one cannot proffer an explanation except that "The Lord raises the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honour" (1 Sam 2:7-8). In 1644, her grave was opened so that one of her relatives could also be buried there, and lo and behold, her body was intact! News of this miracle spread around the neighbouring districts and a noble lady had a coffin of lead made to enshrine the precious remains of this little saint. This lady had been cured of a malignant and incurable tumour in the breast, and her son who was at death's door was restored to full health. Both these miracles were wrought through the intercession of Germaine. Over the next few years hundreds of other miracles were documented and approved.

On May 7, 1854 she was beatified by Pope Pius IX. She was canonized in 1867 and is the patron of victims of abuse, those abandoned and those with disabilities. □



SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

by Dinesh Vasava, sdb

Take a few moments to read the Gospel passage slowly and attentively. Gospel: John 16:12-15 In this passage, Jesus tells His disciples that He has much more to say to them, but they cannot bear it now. He promises that the Spirit of truth will come and guide them into all truth, revealing what is to come and glorifying Jesus by declaring what belongs to Him.

Meditation:

Today, the first Sunday after Pentecost, is the solemnity of The Most Holy Trinity which is one of the central mysteries of the Christian faith. Through this mystery we come to learn that who the one true God is and how He reveals himself to mankind, "...reconciling and uniting himself to men."

Liturgically, we have returned to Ordinary Time. With a deeper sense of the recent Paschal mysteries; we are encouraged to be open to the action of divine Grace, to progress in love of God and of neighbour and to enter more deeply into the life of Father,

Son and Holy Spirit.

The definition given in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) of Holy Trinity too helps us to have a deeper understanding.

The mystery of one God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The revealed truth of the Holy Trinity is at the very root of the Church's living faith as expressed in the Creed. The mystery of the Trinity in itself is inaccessible to the human mind and is the object of faith only because it was revealed by Jesus Christ, the divine Son of the eternal Father.

CCC 237 "The Trinity is a mystery of faith in the strict sense, one of the "mysteries that are hidden in God, which can never be known unless they are revealed by God." To be sure, God has left traces of his Trinitarian being in his work of creation and in his Revelation throughout the Old Testament. But his inmost Being as Holy Trinity is a mystery that is inaccessible to reason alone or even to Israel's faith before the Incarnation of God's Son and the

sending of the Holy Spirit.

Questions for Reflection

1. *Understanding the Holy Spirit:*
- In what ways have you experienced the guidance of the Holy Spirit in your life? Can you identify moments when you felt led to a deeper understanding of truth?

2. *Limitations of Understanding:*
- How do you respond to the idea that there are aspects of God that you may not fully understand? What does it mean to you to trust in God's wisdom and timing?

3. *Unity in Diversity:*
- How does the relationship among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit inspire you to seek unity in your own relationships? What steps can you take to foster harmony in your community?

4. *Reflection on Proverbs:*
- In Proverbs 8:22-31, Wisdom is personified and present at the creation of the world. How does this understanding of Wisdom as part of God's creative process influence your view of creation and your role within it?

5. *Hope in Romans:*
- Romans 5:1-5 speaks of hope and the love of God poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. How does this assurance of God's love affect your daily life and interactions with others?

6. *Living the Trinity:*
- How can you actively live out your understanding of the Trinity in your daily actions and relationships? What concrete steps can you take to reflect the love and

unity of the Trinity in your life?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of the Holy Spirit, who guides us into all truth. Help me to be open to Your Spirit's leading in my life, and grant me the patience to trust in Your timing as I seek to understand Your will. May I grow in my relationship with You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Contemplation:

Spend a few moments in silence, allowing the presence of the Holy Trinity to envelop you. Visualize the dynamic relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. What feelings arise as you contemplate this divine communion?

Action:

Reflect on how you can live out the message of the Trinity this week. Consider actions such as:

- Engaging in a practice of prayer that acknowledges each person of the Trinity.

- Seeking to deepen your understanding of the Holy Spirit's role in your life through scripture or spiritual reading.

- Sharing your insights about the Trinity with others, fostering discussion about God's nature and presence in our lives.

Conclusion

As we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, let us embrace the mystery of God's nature and the profound relationship within the Trinity. May we be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, trust in God's wisdom, and reflect His love in our interactions with others. □

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IS FRIENDSHIP

Pope Francis' Homily (edited) at Domus Sanctae Marthae on Friday 15 May 2020

In the book of the Acts of the Apostles, we see that in the Church, in the beginning, there were times of peace. It says that many times: the Church was growing in peace and the Spirit of the Lord gave it growth (see Acts 9:31). Moments of peace. There were also moments of persecution, beginning with the persecution of Stephen (see Acts 6-7), then Paul the persecutor, converted, but even he persecuted... Moments of peace, moments of persecution; there were even moments of turmoil. And this is the theme of today's first Reading: a moment of turmoil (see 15:22-31). "We have heard that some from our number," the Apostles write to the Christians who have converted from paganism, "we have heard that some from our number who had no mandate from us have upset you – have disturbed you – with their teachings that have disturbed your peace of mind" (v. 24).

What happened? These Christians, who had been pagans, believed in Jesus Christ and had received baptism. And they were happy: they had received the Holy Spirit. They went from paganism to Christianity without any intermediary stage. Instead, those People who were called "Judaizers" sustained that you could not do that, that if someone had been a pagan they had to become Jews first, a good Jew, and then become a Christian, so as to be in line with the election of the People of God. And these Christians did not understand this. "But why? Are we second-class Christians? We cannot go directly from paganism to Christianity? Didn't Christ's resurrection dissolve the ancient law and bring it to an even greater fullness?" They were disturbed and there were a lot of discussions among them. And those who wanted this were people who had pastoral arguments, even some moral ones. They sustained that no, you had to make the passage in this way! And this put into question the freedom of the Holy Spirit, and the free gift of Christ's resurrection and grace. They were methodical, and also rigid.

Jesus had said about these people, these teachers, these doctors of the Law warns, "Woe to you who traverse sea and land to make one convert, and when that happens, you make him worse than before. You make him a child of Gehenna," as Jesus states in the 23rd chapter of Matthew (see v. 15). Some individuals reduced the Law and doctrine to rigid prescriptions, insisting, "You must do this, this, and this," which stripped away the Holy Spirit's freedom. Their followers became uncomfortable and unaware of the joy of the Gospel, believing that strict adherence was the only path to perfection.

These leaders manipulated the consciences of the faithful, creating rigidity or driving them away. Rigidity does not come from the good Spirit; it undermines the free gift of redemption and Christ's resurrection. This issue has recurred throughout Church history, seen in figures like the Pelagians. Even today, some seemingly organized apostolic groups exhibit this same rigidity.

The Spirit of God embodies liberty, and these individuals sought to impose their interpretations, stripping away the freedom of the Holy Spirit and the graciousness of redemption. They insisted that justification requires strict adherence, but justification is a free gift through Jesus's death and resurrection, which cannot be earned or purchased.

The path is beautiful [the way they proceeded]: the Apostles gathered together in this council and in the end they write a letter that says this: "It has been decided by the Holy Spirit and by ourselves not to saddle you with any burden" (Acts 15:28), and they put these obligations and a few common sense moral ones so as not to confuse Christianity with paganism, abstaining from meat offered to idols, etc. And in the end, these Christians who had been disturbed, gathered in an assembly, they received the letter, and "when they read it, they were delighted with the encouragement it gave them" (v. 31). From turmoil to joy. The spirit of rigidity always brings turmoil. "Did I do this all right?. Did I not do that all right? Scrupulosity. The Spirit of evangelical freedom brings you joy because that is exactly what Jesus did by His resurrection: He brought joy! Our relationship with God, our relationship with Jesus is not a relationship of "doing things": "I do this and You give me that". A relationship like that – forgive me, Lord – commercial. No! It is free, just like the relationship between Jesus and the disciples. "You are my friends" (Jn 15:14). "I do not call you slaves, I call you friends" (see v. 15). "You did not choose me, but I chose you" (v. 16). This is gratuitousness.

Let us ask the Lord to help us to discern the fruit of evangelical gratuitousness from the fruits of non-evangelical rigidity, and that He might free us from every turmoil caused by those who put the Faith, the life of Faith under detailed prescriptions, prescriptions that have no meaning. I refer to those prescriptions that have no meaning, not to the Commandments. May He free us from the spirit of rigidity that robs you of freedom. □

MARTIN'S DREAM

By Pierluigi Menato, TA/ID

On the night of the first day of Lent, Martin dreamt that he was alone. It was the most painful dream he could imagine, as he never wanted to be alone.

His palace was open all year round, and he felt so comfortable inside that he could hardly count his friends. Martin's only focus was to organize parties and banquets. He was so wealthy that he spent his money on merriment without a second thought.

However, while his wealth seemed endless, the years of his life were slowly fading away, one by one. Unlike money, which could be replenished, his time diminished steadily. Martin had no time to notice this; if it ever crossed his mind, he would quickly find one more reason to enjoy himself, allowing him to escape from serious thoughts.

That night, however, he found himself in a dream amid a deafening silence. The entire castle felt lifeless. There were no melodies of orchestras rising from the hall, where there



was always dancing until morning, nor the dull clinking of glasses and bottles.

Martin got up from the armchair where he usually fell asleep, exhausted in the midst of the festivities, and began to wander through the corridors and halls. Everywhere was brightly lit, with all the doors wide open, revealing the grand castle filled with lights, though it felt deserted and empty, as if all the living had abandoned it.

With each step he took, Martin's heart raced, and he strained to catch any sound, but all he could hear were his own footsteps and the slamming of the doors he closed behind him. He then began to run, darting around the entire castle, from the attics to the kitchens, but he encountered not a single servant. Even the cats and dogs had vanished. He ran so fast that if he stopped suddenly, the echo of his footsteps through the silent halls would chase after him, filling him with dread.

Eventually, he rushed outside without his cloak, and the wind and cold struck him, but he did not feel them.

Outside, the reflection of the illuminated castle shone brightly, while beyond it lay only darkness. In the stables, not a single horse remained; their gates stood wide open, and the lights burnt in vain.

Martin climbed the stairs of the castle. As soon as he stepped inside, his image emerged in a mirror that spanned the entire wall, standing straight and solitary in the midst of emptiness.

He gazed at himself, and then, as he approached, he noticed a figure moving slowly. It was a woman with white hair, her face

leaning forward, peering at him in bewilderment.

"Who is he?" she pondered. Was that really him?

He had to steady himself because his legs were trembling, rolling his eyes in confusion, unsure of what to do next. Yet he wasn't piously afraid of the deserted castle; instead, a deep sense of anguish gripped him. He recalled the noise, the merriment, and the parties that had filled his life, during which he had run about without rest, without silence.

And what about his friends? All those carefree and cheerful companions who had been with him until now — where had they gone? All that remained was him, reflected in that mirror, silently staring at himself after so much commotion.

It was the first time he had looked at himself in that way, and he felt as though he was discovering a stranger — someone who did not know where he was or where he was going.

Martin gathered all his strength and stepped outside the castle. He walked back and forth, his head in his hands. In his mind, he constantly saw his reflection in the mirror and felt the same wonder and sorrow at realizing he was the lonely older man with white hair living in the empty castle.

The night was long and did not seem to clear up. Even in the dark, Martin noticed someone walking piously ahead on the road. He hurried to catch up with the man and called out to him since he had not looked back.

The man carried a sack on his shoulders, and they greeted each other.

"You too," said the man, "are you going to the Cross on the Mountain?"

"Where is it?" Martin asked.

"Up there," the man replied.

Martin looked in the direction the wayfarer's staff pointed, its tip raised toward the sky, and thought he saw a glimmer at the peak of a mountain.

"Up where?" he inquired. "But there is the mountain, up there. The mountain and the meadows."

"Exactly," said the man. "That's why I am going there."

"But there is no one there. Nobody lives up there."

"That's why, I tell you. I go to be alone."

"Alone!" Martin exclaimed.

"Oh," the traveller resumed with a gentle tone, "there is no fear in being alone."

"You say that!"

"Why not? There is no fear if one prays." Meanwhile, he went on walking.

"But you, perhaps," Martin insisted, "are a saint, a hermit. You have spent your life well and are not afraid to look back."

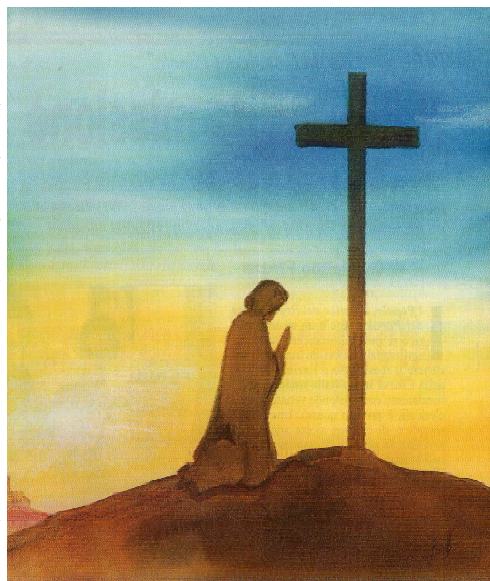
"But you must," said the man. "Now and then, you have to look back. Then you can see better what's in front of you too."

"As for me," Martin replied, "I never wanted to do that."

"I know," the man murmured.

"How do you know?" Martin asked.

"Every year, I passed by your castle on this same night, the time for prayer and reflection. But for



you, it was always Carnival, and I passed by while you didn't see me."

"Lord!" cried Martin.

And suddenly, he woke up.

He jumped up in the armchair where he had fallen asleep during the party, surrounded by the lively sounds and music of his castle. People were gathered around him, full of merriment.

Martin quickly made his way to the nearby window and looked outside. It was pitch dark. He searched for the mountain with his eyes and recognized the faint glow that barely lit the summit, heralding the approach of day. Without saying a word to anyone and without being noticed, he ran out, following the pull of his heart.

When dawn broke, he realized he had arrived at the Cross on the Mountain. He knelt in the solitude of that silence and began to pray. □

FIORETTI OF DON BOSCO - 66

by Michele Molineris

293. Cured of T.B.C. (1882)

A sensational healing occurred in the Oratory around the autumn of 1882. Madame Jeanne Le Mire, who resided in Misevent, a commune in Pont-de-Poitte, Jura, was seriously ill. Despite consultations with some of the best doctors from various places, including Paris, no remedy could be found to combat her consumption. As a result, the young woman had lost so much weight that she weighed only twenty-five kilograms.

They dressed her carefully, and her husband, Paul Noel, would carry her in his arms like a little girl, taking her wherever she wanted to go. The greatest nourishment she managed to consume each day was a raw egg with salt.

Faith was a cornerstone of that noble family. Having been aware of Don Bosco's works for a long time, they decided to reach out to him. In May, Mr. Paul sent him three thousand francs. The saint replied with a heartfelt thank-you, writing a three-page handwritten letter. He announced that on June 29, he would remember the sick girl in all the communions and good works of his youngsters, and that he would celebrate Mass for her. This promise filled Mr. Paul with hope, as he deeply believed in the power of Don Bosco's prayers.

However, there was no improvement in her condition, and no one could imagine that this situation would persist indefinitely. Therefore, Don Bosco, contin-

uing their correspondence, wrote to her husband, urging him to take the sick woman to Turin.

"But how?" he replied. "She is in no condition to travel."

"Take her anyway," replied Don Bosco.

They used a wagon bed to transport her in small stages to Turin. From the inn, Mr. Paul informed Don Bosco that his wife had arrived alive, just as promised.

"For her to get well," he replied, "you must bring her to my Mass tomorrow morning so she can make her devotions."

Mr. Paul hesitated to respond. The next day, they brought her to Mary Help of Christians. After Mass, Don Bosco spoke to her in the sacristy, saying, "Yes, ma'am, we need an act of faith. She was cured. Consider yourself healed and return to fulfil all the obligations of your state."

She quickly began eating again and did remarkably well. A few days later, she was very cheerful and filled with joy, regaining her appetite for life. The entire family expressed their gratitude to God, to Mary, the Help of Christians, and to Don Bosco.

When Don Bosco was in Hyères visiting Count de la Fleche-ray, later Marquis of Aorillard, a family friend, he inquired about Madame Le Mire. He was informed that she had relapsed and was nearly as ill as before.

"Don't worry about it," he replied. "Everything will be fine in a few months."

The healing that was predicted culminated in the birth of a son, which he had greatly desired, and soon after, a second son followed. Both children were attending Jesuit schools in Dijon in 1897.

Mr. Le Mire later met Don Bosco several times, and Don Bosco remarked, "Mr. Le Mire and I are like two brothers."

As Mr. Paul Noel concluded, "The recovery of Mme Le Mire can only be viewed as a miracle granted to Don Bosco," who thus gave back to his benefactors much more than they had received. (*M.B.*, XV, 555-556).

294. Bring me your wife's jewellery (1882)

In the autumn of 1882, an incident highlighted Don Bosco's views on almsgiving. A master builder named Borgo, a close friend of Don Bosco, was a regular benefactor of the Salesian house of San Vincenzo in Sampierdarena. He had lent significant sums of money without charging interest, provided drawings free of charge, and assisted with construction work for two years.

Borgo kept all his late wife's jewellery and precious clothing at home, even though she had passed away twenty years earlier. During a conversation with Don Bosco, he mentioned that he wanted to honour her memory by supporting him more than usual.

Don Bosco replied, "What are all those belongings doing in your house? They are useless to keep when there is such a great need for charity."

"What would you suggest I do with them?" Borgo asked.

"Bring them to the boarding school," Don Bosco advised. "That is the best way to support your wife's soul."

Mr. Borgo left feeling moved and agitated. He regretted making that sacrifice. As he walked home, Don Bosco's words echoed in his

mind. In similar situations, when people sought the preacher's advice or discussed their pasts and futures with him, he would pause for a moment to gather his thoughts before expressing them concisely, giving his responses a sacred quality.

A few days later, knowing that Don Bosco was once again in Sampierdarena, Mr. Borgo visited the boarding school after stopping by his house in La Spezia. He presented Don Bosco with valuable objects, from which Father Belmonte, who was in charge of selling them, obtained more than five thousand lire. (*M.B.*, XV, 521).

295. A beautiful surprise (1882)

In February 1882, Don Bosco was in Marseilles when a woman approached him seeking comfort. She was deeply distressed by the way her son and daughter-in-law were treating her.

Don Bosco advised her, "Pray to Mary, Help of Christians, and come to receive communion at my Mass tomorrow. I will offer it for you."

The woman followed his advice and was punctual in attending the Mass. Upon returning home, she found all her children gathered in the living room. They expressed their regret for their unworthy behaviour and firmly promised to make amends in the future.

Naturally, this led to tears and hugs shared by everyone. (*D'Espiney, Don Bosco*, 244).

296. S.S.S.S.S. (1883)

The vast majority of novices came from Valdocco, where two-thirds of the students in the final

class moved on to the novitiate. However, as a skilled fisher of vocations, Don Bosco always looked for opportunities to engage students from various colleges.

During the Christmas holidays, students from Lanzo, along with their teacher, wrote to Don Borio. In his response, he used one of his clever strategies to encourage the older students to think about their future.

My dear Don Borio, Your letter, along with those from several of your pupils, brought me great consolation. I understand that their expressions reflect the sentiments of all their companions, and I would appreciate it if you could convey my gratitude to them. Please tell them that I love them in Jesus Christ and remember them every morning during Holy Mass. I also ask that they pray for me, especially with some fervent communion.

I want to challenge them with a riddle, offering a prize to those who solve it. H.H.S. He who holds the key to these five S's and puts them into practice has a well-founded hope of experiencing the earthly paradise in this world and the heavenly paradise in the next.

Please extend my warmest greetings to your pupils and encourage them to be very cheerful, especially in the Lord. Moreover, take special care of your health. Greet Mr. Director for me, and please send an effective blessing to Fr. Mella for his cough. Always keep me in your prayers.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ, Fr. John Bosco.

No one provided a solution to the riddle; Don Borio stated that the five enigmatic letters represented Sane, Wise, Holy, Priest,

and Salesian. (*M.B.*, XVI, 14).

297. This house is at your disposal (1883)

In 1883, Mrs. Pastré, a Parisian, attended a talk by Don Bosco at Mary Magdalene Church. Eager to speak with him, she navigated through the large crowd to reach him in the sacristy, where she offered him her contribution, just as many other ladies had done. Filled with joy, she left the gathering.

Not long after this, her daughter fell gravely ill, to the point where her life was in danger. During this time of great worry, it happened to be her mother's name day. The night before, a letter arrived from Don Bosco, extending his best wishes and assuring her that her daughter would be healed. In response, she began a novena to Mary, Help of Christians, while Don Bosco, from Turin, joined her in prayer.

How had Don Bosco discovered her illness? How did he know the exact name and number of her street? Puzzled by these questions, she began the novena with great fervour. On the third day, her daughter, who had not eaten for several days, asked for food. After repeating her request a second and third time, she finally got up and began to walk. After completing the novena, they went to church to thank Our Lady. Overjoyed, the entire family was brainstorming ways to express their gratitude when they learned that Don Bosco needed a house near Marseilles to accommodate his novices. The lady, who owned several villas around Paris as well as two near Marseilles, promptly offered one of her properties to Fr. Bologna and Fr. Albera.

They went to visit the property and found it spacious, well-located, and well-furnished. With great fanfare a legal lease was established for fifteen years at a rent of fifteen hundred francs per year. However, through a private contract, the owner agreed to relinquish her rights to the property entirely and free of charge for the entire period, postponing other decisions for a later time. At that moment, personal circumstances prevented her from acting otherwise.

Don Bosco visited the congregation's new nursery. He was greeted with the usual cheers, and as soon as he entered the house, he asked, "Are there pine trees?"

"Oh yes," came the reply.

"But are there many?" he inquired.

"There are very many. The entire mound is covered with pine trees," was the response.

"Are there also avenues?" he asked.

"Yes, and they are beautiful."

"But is there just one, or are there several?" he continued.

"There are several," they replied.

"There is also a water channel running behind the house?"

"There is a magnificent canal."

"But does it run through the whole property?"

"It runs through the whole of it."

"Well, that's just it. I don't even need to see it anymore. Indeed, I understand now why in the dream I was not told: Here is a house that is given to you or bought; but I was told: This house is at your disposal (*M.B.*, XVII, 49).

298. Buffoon! (1883)

One afternoon in 1883 in Paris, Don Bosco found himself running a little late for his appoint-

ment at the S  nislhac house. The street stretching two hundred metres from the Magdalena Church was so crowded with people that it was impossible to move through the throng. He had to leave his carriage and continue on foot, dressed in the French style with a rabat and sash. Nobody recognized him.

At one point, as he was carried along by the crowd, he became trapped in a doorway and was pushed into a courtyard. From there, it took him considerable effort to find his way back out. When he finally reached the staircase of his destination, he attempted to ascend, but there was no way to take a step forward.

"Let me pass," he said kindly.

"No," came the response. "I have number fifteen; I have number twenty."

"Well," he replied after a moment, "if you don't want me to pass, at least let me rest on that step."

"No, we are the first, and you are an intruder," they said.

"But, good gentlemen, if I cannot go, you will not be able to speak to Don Bosco, because I am Don Bosco," he replied.

They laughed at him, and a chorus of voices around them called him a buffoon.

Patience was required, as there was nothing more he could do. He had to turn back, and met no resistance in doing so. After freeing himself from that situation, he went to visit a family who had been waiting for him for a long time so he could bless a sick person. Had it not been for that setback, he would have been able to console the poor man. (*M.B.*, XVI, 111). □



OUR MOTHER OF PERPETUAL HELP: ACROSS TIME AND MIRACLES

by A.B. Bosco

June 27 marks the feast day of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, honoring the Blessed Virgin Mary's powerful intercession. Known for her miracles and responsiveness to prayers, the icon serves as a source of hope and maternal love for Catholics globally. This 15th-century Byzantine icon, housed in the Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel at the Basilica of Saint Alphonsus Liguori in Rome, is central to the Redemptorist order and has inspired countless lives and miraculous events throughout history.



The Byzantine Origins of the Icon

The icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help has Byzantine origins, meaning it comes from the artistic traditions of the Eastern Christian world. Its distinctive style reflects a period in Christian art that emphasizes spiritual and symbolic representation over naturalistic portrayals. The icon depicts the Virgin Mary holding the child Jesus, capturing a moment of quiet contemplation infused with

urgency. As the child gazes toward the angels holding instruments of his Passion, his fearful expression reflects the deep sorrow and foreknowledge of his suffering. This portrayal has captivated many, inviting devotion and reflection on Christ's sacrifice and the maternal love of Mary.

Traditionally, the icon was created in the 15th century in the

Eastern Christian world, likely in the area of modern-day Turkey. It is believed to have been venerated in Constantinople (now Istanbul). For many years, the icon was kept in a church dedicated to the Holy Virgin in that city. Over time, its influence spread, as it became known for answering prayers, especially for those in desperate need.

The Icon's Journey to the Redemptorists

The icon's journey to its present home with the Redemptorists began in the mid-19th century. In 1855, the icon was entrusted to the care of the Redemptorist Fathers in Rome. Its arrival marked the beginning of a new chapter in the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help, as the Redemptorists played a crucial role in spreading the devotion to this powerful image across the globe.

The story of how the icon came into the possession of the Redemptorists is rooted in a series of providential events. The icon was found in the Greek Orthodox Church of St. Matthew in Rome, where it had been abandoned and forgotten. The Redemptorists, under the leadership of Father Nicholas Mauron, a Belgian Redemptorist priest, took charge of the icon after it had been brought to the church in the late 18th century. Upon receiving the icon, Father Mauron realized the spiritual power it carried, and so he made the decision to publicly display it in the chapel of their residence.

On April 26, 1866, the icon was formally enshrined in the Redemptorist's Basilica of Saint Alphonsus Liguori in Rome, where it

remains to this day. The Redemptorists began to organize novenas and special devotions to Our Mother of Perpetual Help, spreading the devotion around the world. The icon became a symbol of hope for those in need, and it quickly gained recognition for its ability to bring comfort, healing, and miracles to the faithful.

Miracles and the Power of Prayer

From the moment the icon was placed in the Redemptorist Basilica, the miracles associated with it began to multiply. Stories of people who had prayed before the image and received answers to their petitions became widespread. The devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help grew not only in Rome but also across the world, especially in places where Redemptorist missions were established.

The miracles attributed to Our Mother of Perpetual Help are not limited to any one type of need. People have reported healings from physical ailments, cures from life-threatening illnesses, and even miraculous interventions in situations of danger or distress. These miracles have been recounted by ordinary people as well as by those who have sought the icon's help in times of personal crisis, and the widespread nature of these reports has led many to see the icon as a true conduit of God's grace through the intercession of Mary.

The power of the novena to Our Mother of Perpetual Help is also central to its devotion. The Novena, which has been prayed by millions over the years, is a nine-day prayer tradition that is said to bring great blessings and mira-

cles to those who participate in it. The Novena is often prayed by individuals and families in times of need, and its popularity has spread through churches and communities around the world. The devotion to the icon encourages a deep relationship with Mary, asking for her maternal intercession in all aspects of life.

One of the most notable miracles connected with the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help occurred in the 19th century when a woman in Rome, who had been suffering from a terminal illness, was miraculously healed after she prayed before the icon. The woman had been given no hope by her doctors, but after invoking the Virgin's help, she was fully restored to health. This and other similar miracles led to an increased devotion to the icon and to Mary under the title of Our Mother of Perpetual Help.

The Icon's Global Devotion

Over the years, the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help spread rapidly across the world. The Redemptorists established missions in many countries, taking the image of Our Lady with them and promoting the novena. Today, this devotion is found in churches, homes, and communities around the globe, from North America to the Philippines to Latin America and beyond. Millions of Catholics continue to call upon the intercession of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, and her image remains a sign of hope for those who seek her help.

The icon's journey, from its Byzantine roots to its present position as one of the most venerated Marian images in the Catholic

Church, speaks to the power of prayer and the role of Our Blessed Mother in the lives of the faithful. Its history reminds us of Mary's loving care and maternal concern for all of us, no matter our circumstances.

Conclusion: A Call to Devotion

As we celebrate the feast day of Our Mother of Perpetual Help on June 27, we are invited to reflect on the deep history and rich tradition of this devotion. The miracles associated with the icon and the Novena are not just stories from the past but continue to inspire and encourage the faithful today. Our Blessed Mother, in her many forms and titles, remains a constant source of comfort, hope, and protection for all who seek her intercession.

The devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help is an invitation to each of us to draw closer to Mary, to trust in her maternal love, and to ask for her help in our lives. Whether we are facing physical illness, emotional distress, or spiritual challenges, we can be confident that, through the intercession of Our Blessed Mother, we are never alone. She is there to help, to comfort, and to lead us closer to her Son, Jesus Christ.

Let us pray the Novena to Our Mother of Perpetual Help, asking for her powerful intercession in our lives. Let us also share this devotion with others, inviting them to experience the miraculous grace and peace that comes from invoking her name. In doing so, we not only honor her but also deepen our own relationship with the Blessed Mother, whose love and care will always be with us. □



O. PORI MECOI

MY VOCATION STORY

TO ALWAYS BE AMONG THE YOUNG

Interview with Fr. Franz-Ulrich Otto

Are you proud of the award you received from the city of Heilbad Heiligenstadt? Can "Villa Lampe" be considered a contemporary form of the Salesian Oratory?

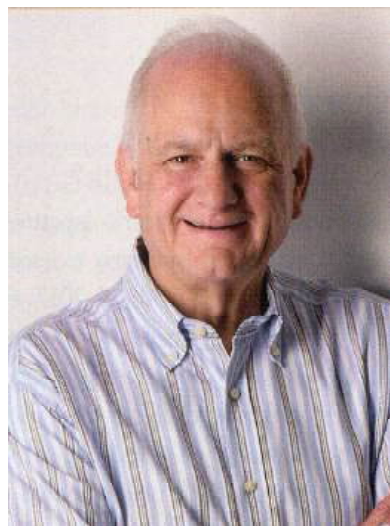
I am indeed thrilled that our efforts with the young people of Heiligenstadt and the surrounding areas have effectively met the needs of so many. We strive to be a reliable source of support for them, not just in recreational activities like play and sports, but also in travel and various projects.

While topics and issues can change rapidly, it's crucial to maintain a constant presence in their lives—to be ready to listen and show genuine interest in their experiences. Young people, with their unique joys, sorrows, desires, and questions, must remain the focus of our attention. Today, this commitment to being present for young people is the essential aspect of what defines a Salesian Oratory.



What inspired the founding of 'Villa Lampe'?

In 1991, shortly after reunifi-



cation, we received a request from Heiligenstadt to help young people navigate this tumultuous period. We approached this challenge with humility, eager to listen and understand their unique situations. We invited young people to participate in planning and collaborating with religious and civil organizations, our team of three Salesians initiated meaningful dialogue, generating ideas and turning them into reality, ultimately making a lasting impact on their lives.

What priorities have we established for ourselves?

We began our mission with young people by creating a vibrant

Salesian oratory, open daily with extended hours. Living on-site, we uniquely provide 24/7 support, allowing young people to reach out to us at any time, which is crucial for those in crisis. Our welcoming space offers stability and security, especially for those lacking parental attention. This meeting point enables us to engage constructively with young people facing challenges, ensuring we remain a constant support at Villa Lampe. We have also expanded our priorities by launching school social work initiatives and creating activities for those not in school. Our community has established a comprehensive child and youth protection service that offers immediate support for those in urgent need. For years, we've travelled to small villages in an old minibus, creating initiatives for rural youth that have led to around twenty thriving youth associations. We also provide hospitality to young people, including unaccompanied minors, and our Salesians offer much-needed spiritual support.

How do you evaluate collaboration with your lay staff?

At Villa Lampe, the dedicated lay staff is the backbone of our Salesian community, enabling our growth and expansion. Our team of professionals in pedagogy, therapy, administration, and technical fields collaborates effectively to serve young people. Through careful selection and ongoing professional development, including seminars and training that align with Don Bosco's spirit, we equip our staff to address current challenges. Our trips to Colle Don Bosco and Turin further

enrich our understanding of Don Bosco's teachings. We are proud that our lay collaborators, alongside the Salesians of Don Bosco, are not only supporters but essential partners in our mission to make a lasting impact on the lives of young people.

How do you envision the future of the Salesian Congregation in Germany?

Having served as Vice-Provincial from 2005 to 2017, I have gained valuable insights into our impactful work in Germany. My mission focused on enhancing our educational institutions and supporting our coworkers. We engage in a wide array of initiatives, including secondary education, vocational training, special needs programs, and youth work projects. We operate youth hostels, provide care for young refugees, and offer spiritual guidance, all aimed at helping young individuals thrive. With the recent addition of our Istanbul office, we face exciting challenges and opportunities. Our dedicated coworkers, who share our mission, are key to shaping a hopeful and transformative future for the youth we serve. Even as the number of Salesians of Don Bosco in Germany declines, I remain optimistic about our mission's future, thanks to the dedication and passion of our talented team. Let's continue to inspire greater engagement in our work!

How was my Salesian Vocation born?

My Salesian vocation began within my family, rooted in a strong Christian faith, and was deepened by my experiences in



the German scout movement, which felt like a second home. This community fostered authentic faith and encouraged me to reflect on my gifts and purpose in the world and the Church. It was during this journey of self-discovery that the idea of becoming a priest to serve young people emerged. My connection with Don Bosco and his spiritual sons, through a distant Salesian relative, made it clear that I sought a meaningful blend of priesthood and youth ministry. While I never planned to join a religious order, the desire to dedicate my life to young people became undeniable. Today, I am confident that this path is my true calling, and I am passionate about making a lasting impact on the lives of young people.

Why do young people today find it challenging to live by faith?

There are two key reasons. First, our society prioritizes action, fun, and success, often lacking deeper values—focusing solely on individual gratification. Second, young people in our Church encounter a reality that feels foreign, with unclear roles and an unfamiliar language. Unfortunately, few are willing to bridge this gap, and many believe that faith and the Church are relics of the past, with insufficient authentic examples to counter

this view. However, there is hope in Pope Francis, who encourages us to listen to young voices and recognize their significance. It's vital that we support every young person, particularly those who are disadvantaged, to maintain our integrity.

Your experience is invaluable. What does it mean for our Salesian Congregation?

Every Salesian, inspired by Don Bosco, gains crucial insights in connecting with young people. By listening to them and being present, we reveal the beauty of God's creation, as each individual uniquely reflects our Creator. Each relationship is a journey of discovery that demands our full engagement; otherwise, we risk missing the meaningful responses they deserve. The essence of effective pedagogy in the spirit of Don Bosco is recognizing the dignity of every person, rooted in our Christian faith. Our challenge now is to extend this transformative vision beyond our Church and into the broader world. □



IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

He Hates To Fly

Our family had gathered around the television to witness the arrival in the United States of Pope John Paul II. As we watched the Pontiff step off the plane and symbolically kiss the ground, my 80-year-old aunt turned to me and confided, "I know just how he feels. I hate to fly, too,"

Looks Nice

The miser was nearing his end, and he was dictating his will. "To each of my employees, who has been with me for five years or more, I leave the sum or one thousand pounds."

"Very generous," said the lawyer, in admiration.

"Not at all," said the sick man, "there's not one of them who has been with me that long, but it will look well in the papers!"

I Know Everything

"Yes sir," said the captain of the steamboat to a nervous passenger, "I've been running boats on this river so long that I know where every snag and sandbar is."

Just then, the boat struck a snag and shook from stem to stern. "There," said the captain, that's one of them now.»

Windfall

A worker on a tugboat in New York drowned. Company insurance and other benefactions resulted in the widow getting a total sum of \$70,000.

When consolation was offered

the widow, she said, «Poor Paddy never learned how to swim, Thanks be to God.»

Getting Acquainted

Whenever I go by a church, I stop and make a visit;

So that some day when I'm carried in, The Lord won't say, "Who is it?"

How They Are

An optimist gets up in the morning and says: "Good morning, Lord!" A pessimist gets up and groans "Good Lord, morning!"

But Me No Butts

A man was talking about his wife's efforts to stop smoking. "She doesn't seem able to break the habit," he said. "She's an invertebrate smoker."

"You mean inveterate, don't you?" a companion asked.

"No, invertebrate. No backbone."

Kind to Wife

Husband: "I've found this great job. Good salary, free health and accident insurance, paid holidays and coffee breaks."

Wife: "That's wonderful, dear!"

Husband: "I knew you'd be pleased. You start on Monday."

The Patient Speaks

Psychiatrist: "I'm not aware of your problem, so perhaps you should start at the beginning."

Patient: "All right. In the beginning I created the heavens and the earth..." □

THE INVISIBLE SECRET

“Doctor, I have a problem that troubles me, and perhaps you can help. I have a question to ask you. As you know, I live alone. Occasionally, my elderly parents visit, or some friends come over, but ultimately, I remain single and alone. I suspect I will continue this way for the rest of my life. However, there is a mystery I want to solve: I’ve never bought a pair of socks or underwear in my life. Yet, my drawer is always full. They are never missing and always seem to be there. How is this possible? Something strange is happening in those drawers, and I’m becoming obsessed with it; I can’t sleep at night because of it.

The doctor replied, ‘Listen, you need to get some rest. I’m going to prescribe you a sleeping pill that will help you greatly.’”

“Is it safe? Why is there this mystery...”

“Forget about this nonsense and take two of these pills in the evening. You’ll see that you won’t be thinking about stockings and drawers anymore.” The patient took the

prescription and left.

Later that evening, the doctor spoke to his wife.

“Do you want to hear something funny? I had the strangest patient at the office today...” He shared the entire story, trying to highlight the humorous side, but he could tell that his wife wasn’t laughing.

“What did you do?” she asked.

“I prescribed him sleeping pills; at least now he sleeps and doesn’t dwell on certain pathologies anymore.”

“Didn’t you explain why his drawer is always full?”

“And what is there to explain?”



His wife, sounding almost annoyed, replied, “It means there are women who love him — there always have been. There are women who think about him and care for him, even in the small things. But why don’t you men ever consider that? You take everything for granted, yet you are surrounded by more devotion than you realize.”

“Ah.”

“You never see the love that surrounds you. It’s as invisible as air, yet care and attention fill your life and your days. You continue to ignore it, and eventually, you may become like your patient; you might become extravagant. You are surrounded by so much love that you don’t even dream of it. Open your eyes, love.” □

LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

We will soon be celebrating our 39th wedding anniversary on April 20, 2025.

Within just three months of our marriage, I experienced a peculiar fear that my husband might desert me. Initially, my husband and I dismissed it as a passing thought, but over time, this fear began to infiltrate our relationship to such an extent that I was advised to visit a counselor.

For the past 38 years, my husband and I have sought help from over 30 medical practitioners, priests, and counselors. Whenever someone recommended a good practitioner, we would not hesitate to go to them. The number of medications prescribed grew so extensive that my medicines became my primary source of nourishment.

Two or three weeks ago, my husband suggested that we start reciting **The Three Hail Marys**. We began this devotion, and miraculously, the negative thoughts dissipated. We are so grateful to our Blessed Mother for interceding for us and guiding our relationship. Even in the later years of our lives, Mother Mary has not abandoned or forsaken us.

Truly, this is our miracle, and we cannot express enough gratitude to Our Blessed Mother for her divine assistance.

Trufina Gonsalves, Bandra West, Mumbai

POPE’S WORLDWIDE PRAYER NETWORK JUNE 2025

That the World might Grow in Compassion

Let us pray that each one of us might find consolation in a personal relationship with Jesus, and from his Heart, learn to have compassion on the world.

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FULL OF GRACE

By giving life to Christ, who conquered death and ascended into Heaven, it becomes clear that, due to the profound love expressed by the Son toward such a remarkable Mother and the mysteries connecting Mary to Jesus, she should be closely associated, body and soul, with divine glory and the triumph of Paradise.

It's important to understand that the doctrine of Our Lady is not based solely on devotion or well-meaning ideas, but on a strong foundation of historical truth and biblical revelation, acknowledging Mary as the Mother of God and our Mother.

Through our relationship with Our Lady, we gain insights into devotion and worship, revealing her as the ideal model for religious life.

(Pope Paul VI, 15 Aug. 1963)

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.

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