

CONTENTS

From The Editor's Desk:
Mind Moving Your Feet?.....3

Spoiler Alert! Raise Your Kids Well
- *Ian Pinto, sdb*.....4

Youth on the Move:
Learning by Failing
- *Alessandra Mastrodonato*.....8

Salesian Saint: Stephen Ferrando
(1895 -1978).....10

Witnesses In And For Our Times:
Bl. Elizabeth of the Trinity.....13

Lectio Divina: The Parable of the
Talents - *Ian Pinto sdb*.....16

Quietspaces: In the Sure Hands of
God - *Pope Francis*.....18

The King's Son
- *Fr. Ian Doullton's Collection*.....20

Don Bosco and His People:
The Sense of God
- *Natale Cerrato*.....24

Reflecting on Mary: Mary, Mother of
Mercy - *Angelo di Maria*.....28

NewsBits.....30

Walking With the Church: A Follow
up on Masses on Saturdays
Evenings.....31

My Words Will Not Pass Away
Marco Bonatti.....33

In a Cheerful Mood.....32

The Devotion of
the Three Hail Marys.....33
They Are Grateful to
Our Lady & Don Bosco.....35



Through
the intercession
of Blessed Mary,
the Mother of your Son,
may no petition
go unanswered
and
no request
be made in vain.

From the Common of the Blessed Virgin

From The Editor's Desk

MIND MOVING YOUR FEET?

It was a regular warm summer morning and I was entering the station at Lonavla to catch the shuttle to Poona. On the platform people stood looking at the sleepers waiting for the toot from the train as it entered the platform.

As the train pulled in I noticed two seats vacant near the door. I chose the one facing the direction in which the train was travelling. There were two men sitting by the window, facing each other. Both were in their early twenties. The chap sitting in the seat diagonal to mine had his feet stretched out under my seat. I hesitated for a second expecting him to pull up his feet before I sat down. He didn't. Thoughts flashed through my mind.... shall I move? No. There isn't much choice other than to move over to the seat beside him. I'll excuse myself and ask him to move his feet. I began to think how this verbal exchange might run... "Excuse me, would you mind moving your feet?" "Excuse me but would you move your feet out of my way?"

He might pretend not to hear me and I'd feel foolish. He might be rude and say "I'll put my feet where I like!"...Or worse!!!...Too much time had passed now anyway, I should have challenged him when I first came in. It would sound too calculated now and I didn't want him to know how much it bothered me. I'll continue to pretend I haven't noticed the inconvenience he was causing me.

I looked around the compartment; some people were reading books or newspapers while others looked out the windows. I caught the eye of a girl but she hurriedly looked away.

This brought me back to my fellow traveller. Since his feet were out of sight under my seat, my gaze travelled from just below his knees up to his face. He was still unwilling to catch my eye. His black hair was sleeked back. He was wearing a faded denim jacket and jeans. His lunch box was beside him. Anger begins to well up in me again.

I've paid for my seat too. I will tell him to move. Suddenly the silence in the carriage became palpable. If I said anything everyone would tune in, glad of a little drama to break the monotony. No. Even if I don't say anything I could still make my point by not moving if he gets up to go before me. Oh dear! This isn't very Christian, why do I allow myself get so steamed up over nothing?

Stations came and went and finally the train pulled into Poona and the carriages emptied. From the corner of my eye I saw he was preparing to get out. Will I? Won't I... don't think about it? I wish this hadn't happened. I was in such a good mood before I sat down. What does it matter whether or not I make a point with him? I might never see him again. I shouldn't allow it to get to me. He straightened his jacket, ran his hand through his hair and picked up his lunch box. He reached down by his right side as he got to his feet, he brought out a stick, which he proceeded to unfold. It was a white stick. I stood up to let him pass.

Fr. Ian Doullton sdb

SPOILER ALERT! RAISE YOUR KIDS WELL

Ian Pinto, *sdb*

WHO LIKES SPOILT BRATS?

Ever so often one comes across a child who displays such brashness and disregard for others' feelings that one cannot but help think, "That kid is a spoilt brat!" The number of such spoilt children are steadily on the rise. Parents are unsure of how to raise their kids and end up leaving them so free that they grow wild like weeds.

Usually, parents will not take responsibility for their child's brash behaviour but I'm going to recount a story of a mother who complained with a sense of guilt, "I think I may have spoiled him". Her son was the third child in a family of four children. His parents were not very well-to-do, but they were well-off by most people's standards. They lived in a big house and took a family vacation every year. However, the boy often complained loudly, that he got less than his siblings. He sometimes borrowed their possessions without asking permission. He violated curfew frequently and would not accept punishment. He could not be counted on to do things he said he would do. He seemed inconsiderate and not concerned about the opinion of others. He would get bored often and would engage in all kinds of activities in an attempt to escape boredom. He was irritable and snobbish and could hardly get through a conversation without disgusting the other person. He valued nothing; neither other people's

time, money nor possessions. Once he spilled a drink over his friend's computer and when he got upset, he laughed and told them to purchase a new one!

A spoiled child may be recognized by an unwillingness to conform to the ordinary demands of living in a family: for example, a refusal to come for dinner on time, a demand for attention or for a privilege denied to others, a strategy for getting his or her way by creating a fuss publicly. The spoiled child is likely to be irritable and unsympathetic to others. He/she seems comfortable ignoring his/her parents' wishes. "They want what they want when they want it."

The spoiled person is discontented. It is not enough for him/her to have a horse for a pet, they insist on riding it to school every day! It is not enough to be rich, he/she has to pretend to be even richer, it is not enough to be good-looking, he/she has to be constantly told so by everyone. They do not need to be polite, because they can get away with being rude. They push themselves to the front of the line. Small frustrations become intolerable. Mostly, however, since they cannot ever get enough, they will seem to others to be self-centered and insecure. Such people are constantly unhappy, and it falls to parents to prevent their child from growing up this way. I'm certain that no parent would like to hear someone comment about their

children that "He/she is such a spoilt brat." In that case, getting upset and throwing a tantrum won't do much good, it will only reveal the source of the child's spoilt behaviour.

INDICATORS OF SPOILING

No parent intentionally sets out to spoil their kids. Some may want to provide them the financial comforts they themselves never enjoyed. Others may try and make-up for not spending time with their children by showering them with gifts. It does seem like a better option to give in to your kids demands after returning home from a tiring day at work. No one would like to be welcomed home with the sound of whining!

There is nothing wrong with loving your child and wanting whats best for him/her but doing so at the cost of all etiquette and common sense is wrong. Giving a child gifts does not spoil him/her but giving in to their every demand does. Fulfilling a child's desires isn't wrong in itself but doing it every time the child demands is. The list can go on. Basically, balance is the key.

Below are mentioned a few telltale signs that are sure indicators that you are raising a spoilt child:

1) Giving in to the child's every request - This goes against putting the child's best interests first. Some parents are foolish to think that giving the child whatever he/she wants is desirable and healthy. It is in fact extremely counter-productive since it teaches the child that he/she can get anything he/she wants even

if it is unrealistic. Worse still, this only begins at home but is gradually carried out into the world and we know how embarrassing it can be.

The child unconsciously forms a pattern. He/she realizes that he/she only needs to whine or throw a tantrum and make the other person uncomfortable enough to satisfy his/her desires. This is not a healthy behaviour in any relationship and such a person will find people fleeing away rather than drawing near to them. This in turn can make them even more narcissistic, egocentric and lonely.

2) Delivering empty threats -

This is a common reaction. What happens is that one feels exasperated and reacts impulsively instead of pausing to see whether what is being said is effective; or one feels threatened when the children don't listen and try to up the ante by saying something extreme because it seems like nothing else will get through to them. A father coming home from work and finding his kids glued to the television scolds, "I will disconnect the cable if I find you watching television again", even though he has no intention of doing so since it means that he won't be able to watch the football game on the weekend.

Parents must realize however, that empty threats are exactly what their name suggests - empty. They have no value. They usually come out when one has reached the end of one's rope or when one is too tired to think properly. In such a state of mind, one is not in a position to consider the child's point of view or foresee how what one says will con-

tribute to aggravating the situation rather than alleviating it.

3) Being Inconsistent with Expectations and Consequences - Despite their demands, children desire consistency especially when it comes to enforcing consequences and establishing expectations. It is difficult to tell one's kids to avoid junk food when one brings home burgers every other day. Also one must correct the kids regularly for not becoming behaviours and not postpone that for when one is better disposed or 'in the mood'.

It is unfair to expect a child to know what to do when the parent is inconsistent. He/she gets confused when his/her responsibilities aren't clear, or if you don't always follow through with the consequences. Being too lenient can also encourage the child to develop the idea that rules are meant to be broken. With no expectations in place, he/she finds it difficult to develop an idea of what is expected of him/her and act accordingly. Being consistent is of utmost importance, even if it means upsetting the child. But one must beware of becoming overly-demanding. This is equally counter-productive.

4) Shielding the child from difficult emotions - As parents it is natural to feel protective of your child but one must beware of becoming over-protective as it can harm the child's growth. Some parents try their level best to please their kids to the extent of shielding them from anything unpleasant or challenging. They fail to realize that there can be no gain without some amount of

pain. A caterpillar that desires to be a butterfly must undergo a painful and stressful experience - breaking out of the cocoon in which it has been growing as a butterfly for so many weeks. If the butterfly doesn't break out of the cocoon by its own strength, that is, if it receives any external help, it ends up weaker than its counterparts who struggled to break free and gradually dies prematurely. A similar principle works in the case of children.

If a child grows in such a cushioned environment, it will not develop the coping skills required to face the world. He/she will instead suffer trauma at the slightest provocation or obstacle and will find it extremely difficult to deal with emotional issues. Worse still, he/she will fail to build up a healthy self-image and will suffer from persistent self-doubt and anxiety.

5) Tolerating everything the child does - Children are innocent and ignorant of social norms and manners. They are curious about everything and want to try it all, even the things they are warned to avoid. One of the primary duties of a parent is to teach the child how to live like a human being. One of the first and most important things children must learn is manners and this goes beyond the magic words. Manners are the style of living. One can be rich but have no manners and he/she would behave in particular ways. On the other hand, one could encounter a rich person who is well-groomed and immediately the difference is noticeable. Manners are what people remember about you long

after they have forgotten what you look like or said.

Children can be quite insolent when young. They have the tendency to disrespect authority and display wanton rudeness. Such behaviour mustn't be tolerated since the child will neither learn what is good nor understand why his/her behaviour is wrong. Parents sometimes appear to shy away from correcting their children. With the increasing awareness about child abuse, it is rather risky to correct your child but correction doesn't necessarily mean corporal punishment. Correction is vital for growth. The child needs to understand that some behaviours are not to be engaged in since they neither do good to others nor to oneself. Tolerating everything for the sake of pleasing the child is disastrous and ought to be avoided.

DON'T SPOIL YOUR CHILD

No parent likes listening to a tantrum, whether it's from a child who refuses to go to school or an 8-year-old who slams her door over your refusal to buy her a cell phone. But giving in is far worse. The main reason a kid will continue to have meltdowns is that they're successful. Don't engage the behavior and it will stop ... eventually. Another useful way of tackling tantrums is ignoring the child temporarily. While you need to keep an eye on your tantruming child in a public place, giving the behavior too much attention virtually guarantees a repeat performance. Instead, calmly take your child to the car where he/she can finish. When kids realize that you won't be manipulated when they make

a scene, they're less likely to try that tactic in the future.

Spoilt kids feel entitled not only to get the things they want but to get them immediately. Refusing or at least holding off on indulgences will help your child develop self-discipline and allow him to place a higher value on the things he receives. One parent recalls that, after his then 5-year-old daughter began getting an allowance, he didn't buy her a balloon at the street fair that year. He told her that if she really wanted a balloon, she could use her own money. She wound up using her cash for something else. Besides teaching kids to wait verbally, one can do so in practice. One way of doing this is looking for opportunities for them to see you waiting for the things you want. If you see a pair of jeans at the mall that you decide not to buy, for instance, let your child know why ("They fit well, but my old jeans still look good" or "I'll wait until they go on sale").

In the book of Proverbs (22:6) one reads, "Teach a child the way he should go, he will not stray from it while he lives." This is one of the most important things parents ought to keep in mind. In fact, it could very well serve as the foundational maxim of all parenting. Since the aim of parenting is to raise good, well-mannered and responsible adults, careful attention ought to be given to the progress and growth of a child. A spoilt child today will be a sorry adult tomorrow. The power to nurture kids well or to spoil them lies with parents and therefore the responsibility is tremendous as it is vital. □

LEARNING BY FALLING

Alessandra Mastrodonato

Mistakes are part of life. No path is free of defeats or failures. Every failure, if reworked with awareness, can become an important growth and maturing opportunity.

There is an old unwritten rule, the fruit of that wise teacher – experience, which reminds us that there's no growth or progress that does not pass through the tortuous path strewn with mistakes. "Learn by falling," as adults keep telling daring little toddlers as they stumble in the not-so-easy task of learning to walk. It is a valuable lesson that teaches us early in life not to be discouraged by setbacks; facing lightly the inevitable bumps of life, without fearing the bruises and scrapes that we receive as each day we try to keep our balance.

What often happens however is that, as we grow older, we forget the importance of this lesson; we convince ourselves, or passively accept that becoming an adult means doing always the right thing, reaching directly for the goal, frantically chasing an ideal of perfection, thus making us slaves of efficiency and profit at all costs and banishing from our lives the very right and even the possibility of making mistakes. The mistake: from being a

moment of constructive growth and learning on the job, becomes a luxury that we don't permit ourselves as being an unnecessary and harmful deviation on our path to success and complete self-realization, an unforgivable waste of time and energy that distracts us from our targets and moves us away from our final goal. And if ever, for some unfortunate reason, we happen to fall, our first concern is to find a scapegoat to minimize our responsibility by blaming some external factor independent from us, or at least trying to hide our failures from others but even before that, from ourselves, so as not to have to face the frustration of failure.

So we lose sight of mistakes that are part of life, that there is no path free of failure and loss. Every failure if reworked with care becomes an important growth and maturing opportunity to reflect on the path taken and maybe the possibility of a new direction to our life plan, adjusting the path that we've al-



ready chosen.

Instead of wearing ourselves out on the impossible task of studiously trying to avoid every possible mistake even at the cost of never completing the project and risking the essential and

tough path to adulthood, we should go back to make peace with our fallibility by learning to fall like snow. Because, as someone once wrote: "Those who walk sometimes fall; only those who sit never fall!" □ SB 4/2018

LIKE SNOW

*Snow, teach me how to fall
in the nights that hurt,
trying to hide my mistakes,
erasing them without a sound,
slipping through the years
not burdening
the hearts of others.
But, but it's not so simple
not to listen to how quiet it is,
it's not easy here,
to look at the sky tonight.*

*Because of who I am,
I have learned from you,
you are the answer,
without any question,
by the lights you've turned on
setting the winter on fire,
teaching me to fall,
like snow,
like snow...*

*Snow, let me learn from you,
what you know to do,
to cover our paths,
to erase our tracks in a moment.
It's not easy,
to hear the silence
that's not easy,
to look at the sky tonight.*

*Because of who I am,
I have learned from you...
You are the answer,
without any question,
by the lights you've turned on,
setting the winter on fire,
teaching me to fall,
like snow,
like snow,
Snow, teach me to fall...*

(Giorgia feat. Marco Mengoni, 2017)

SALESIAN SAINTS

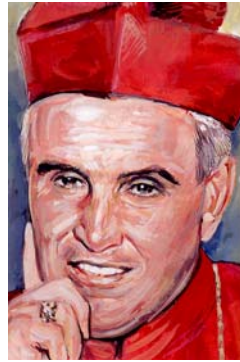
STEPHEN FERRANDO 1895 - 1978

*Salesian Bishop,
Servant of God*

Stephen Ferrando was born at Rossiglione in the province of Genoa on September 28, 1895 to Agostino and Giusepina Salvi. From his earliest years he attended Salesian schools first at Fossano and then in Turin. Having come in contact with the 'first generation' Salesians he breathed the atmosphere of the congregation's origins of great love and goodness. Fascinated by the life of Don Bosco, he asked to become a Salesian and so, on September 16, 1912 he made his religious profession at Foglizzo Cànaveise (Turin). As a young religious he was assigned to the Salesian house of Borgo San Martino (Alessandria). It was here that he received a letter from the headquarters of the Salesians asking him what form of apostolate he wished to dedicate himself to once he was or-



Ferrando the Soldier



...dained a priest. Ferrando replied: "Missionary!"

During the First World War he served in the medical corps earning a silver medal for valour. For him the war became a general test for his future missionary endeavours. He distinguished himself with strength of character, a singular determination in pursuing initiatives undertaken and a harmonious temperament. After completing his theological studies he was ordained on March 18, 1923 at Borgo San Martino. He had asked to go to the missions and was sent to the Indian state of Assam bordering Tibet, China and Burma. On December 2, 1923 he set sail from Venice with nine other companions as a missionary for India. For ten years he was the master of novices and the rector of the house of studies for philosophy

and theology. As a worthy son of Don Bosco he went with the young Salesians to the villages around to learn the language and he organized educational and pastoral activities. Father Stephen Ferrando was above all a missionary, living the phenomenal planting of the Church and of the Congregation in that vast region. During this time he also took over from the Prefect Apostolic, Monsignor Mathias and even while he fulfilled these responsibilities he remained a missionary at heart, never missing an opportunity to visit the villages and preach the Gospel. From the beginning, the missions were a privileged expression of the Salesian charism among youngsters. Beginning with educating youngsters to evangelizing the local people was the specific missionary strategy adopted by the Salesians in all their missions. In the first place, it should be emphasized that from the outset the missionaries were an international group coming from various countries, presenting the reality of a Universal Church. It was also helpful that these missionaries kept in touch with the countries of their origin for economical and psychological support which was so necessary for the rapid development of the mission. Wherever Salesian missionary work began, one saw the transformation, growth and progress throughout the surrounding areas.

To his surprise, in 1934 Pope Pius XI appointed him bishop of the diocese of Krishnagar. On November 11, he was solemnly



Shillong Cathedral

consecrated bishop in Shillong. His motto was "Apostle of Christ." A year later he returned to Shillong as bishop where he remained for the next 34 years. He worked with zeal in that vast diocese which included the whole of North East India at that time. Taking possession of the new diocese he kissed the soil and entrusted his endeavours to Jesus Crucified. He asked his priests to go into the villages and preach the Gospel. He was constantly on the move. As an apostle of Christ he visited the missionary areas and villages on foot. He used to tell his priests: "You can't go around in vehicles to convert souls and solve their problems. You have to go on foot." Following the example of the Apostle of the Gentiles he became everything to everyone; learning languages, customs, traditions, understanding the culture of these people and preaching Christ to them most effectively. The Salesian style characterized his apostolate: joy, simplicity and a direct contact with the people. He approached children, the needy, the poor and everyone with affection. His humility, simplicity and love for the poor led many to repentance and to seek

baptism. He rebuilt the great cathedral and the missionary complex. He spread devotion to Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco, wanting Indians themselves to be the first evangelizers in their land.

During the Second World War, missionaries from abroad had been interned in concentration camps thus slowing down the work of evangelization. While he sought a solution, he happened to see a group of ex-students of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Guwahati, helping people and looking after wounded soldiers. They expressed their desire to become religious and dedicate themselves to works of charity. He began by teaching a group of Indian catechists to love of Jesus, Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco, the missions and the poor and thus he founded the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians.

On June 26, 1968, having taken part in the work of the Second Vatican Council he resigned from the diocese. When he went there for the first time he found 4000 Catholics and now as he was leaving there were 500,000. In 1972 he returned to Assam to



'Venerable' Celebrations, Rome

consecrate the Cathedral of Shillong that was finally completed. The old missionary bishop retired to the Salesian house of Quarto (Genoa).

In 1970 he wrote: "Here in Italy they often ask me: 'How is it you left Assam after 47 years of missionary life?' I replied: Because finally the day that I longed for has dawned, when the Church in India can work for itself." He died on June 20, 1978. Nine years later, the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians wanted to have back the mortal remains of their founder. The urn of the remains of Monsignor Ferrando came to rest in the chapel of the convent of St. Margaret in Shillong, the land that had become his second home. □

Prayer

*Almighty and eternal God, who willed that all people be saved, we thank you for you gave to **Stephen Ferrando** the vocation of a priest and religious among the sons of Don Bosco. You made him an intrepid missionary and a prudent bishop among the peoples of the North-East and the founder of a new religious family. We humbly pray, through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians, that the Church recognizes in Stephen Ferrando the sign of your holiness and that the Christian people may find in his life an example, in his intercession a helper and through the communion of grace, a bond of fraternal charity and if it is your will, through his intercession grant us the grace we implore through your goodness. Through Christ our Lord. Amen*

Witnesses in & for Our Times

BL. ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY

Everything Passes Only Love Endures

(NOVEMBER 9)



On November 19, 1906, at the Carmel in Dijon, a young nun died. She was unknown to the greats of the world and many considered her "useless" (a cloistered nun has no impact on history) but she was known and infinitely loved by God: Elizabeth of the Trinity, born Elizabeth Catez. Her life ended at the age of 26, devoured by tuberculosis, but she was more than ready to go 'Up There.'

Only 26 years of earthly life, five of which she spent as a religious, but they were sufficient to make her a mystic who enlightened the twentieth century and beyond by her example and words and was declared Blessed by Pope John Paul II in 1984.

It would be a mistake however, to concentrate mainly on the years she lived as a Carmelite but the path to holiness had already begun many years earlier, though they were fortified and culminated during the last five years at Carmel. For this reason she could also be proposed as a model of lay sanctity.

A very lively girl

Elizabeth was born at Dijon in



1880 to Maria Rolland and Joseph Catez, an officer in the French army. His family was well placed socially. From her father she inherited the traits of perseverance, constancy and courage. From her mother instead, she imbibed a strong sensibility for nature, travel and a certain "savoir vivre" enriched by the ease of social relationships.

Elizabeth was considered a child not easily malleable, pos-

sessing a strong character, sometimes irascible and impetuous and her sister Margaret vouched that sometimes she was even *"très diable."*

The one who prepared her for her First Communion stated that Elizabeth possessed "a temperament that would turn her into either an angel or a demon."

This is what she wrote about herself: "I loved prayer very much and also the Good Lord even before my First Communion. I could not understand how one could give one's heart to another. Already then I was determined not to love Him and not to live only for Him!"

So, even as a little girl she had some very firm ideas. But the great turning point came for her on April 19, 1890. For her, it was a great day; the day of her First Communion. She wrote: "On that great day, we gave ourselves to each other totally;" a promise of total and mutual love with the Eucharistic Christ to whom she remained faithful up to the end. For that great Eucharistic appointment her mother played a key role. It was she who told that sometimes restless and difficult child: "If you want to make your First Communion you have absolutely to change."

Elizabeth: It's "the house of God"

Elizabeth had another, more important and providential encounter on the afternoon of that great day. A few hundred metres from her house was the Carmelite monastery with a church attached, which the Catez family frequented. Elizabeth could even see Him from her bedroom. That afternoon the prioress of the mon-

astery told Elizabeth that her name meant "House of God" and she gave her a little picture behind which she wrote: "Your blessed name hides a mystery that has been revealed on this great day. My child, your earthly name is "House of God" (= Elizabeth) a God who is Love."

Those were timely words, and that intuition about the name was like a revelation that impressed her. The thought of being "inhabited by God" (the Trinity) and of always having to welcome Him with immense love would follow her to the end of her life. Elizabeth was a precocious child not only spiritually but also musically. She had a great passion for the piano and for dance. Already at the age of eight she received her first award for piano and at thirteen she received an award from the Dijon Conservatoire.

"Elizabeth is not like others"

She had musical talents, constancy, a will and discipline to practice daily. These were dreams of her mother too. The girl seemed to have before her a very high artistic and a social life. Her mother's dream was that she become a pianist.

At the age of fourteen she made the vow to remain a virgin, a decision she took on her own with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit present at all her great spiritual decisions like the decision to become a Carmelite, in spite of the "no" of her mother. She decisively and peremptorily won her first battle. Now the girl had a clear idea of her future. It would only be a matter of time.

When her mother, to distract her from such thoughts, took her to

dances, and musical mornings to show her the great world, those who saw her realized that Elizabeth was really "elsewhere," beyond those feasts, parties and that kind of worldliness. In fact, they said: "Elizabeth isn't here, she's looking at God." No good boy ever missed her but then, frightened away by her personality, he would withdraw admitting to his friends: "She's not like the others."

She would later tell her superior: "By now, I belonged entirely to God. In the midst of worldly feasts, I was taken up by my Master and the thought of Communion the following morning, and at one point I would become insensitive and disconnected from all that was happening around me."

Elizabeth lived for Christ and only for him, the true and ultimate reality for her. Everything else was now secondary, deplete of value before this absolute preference.

Then the great day arrived. Now an adult (and her mother couldn't oppose her) Elizabeth realized her dream to enter Carmel, in the monastery near her home. It was the month of August 1901.

"The Trinity is here"

On entering the monastery to begin her new life, she was heard murmuring: "God is here! How present he is! How he surrounds me!" And when she entered her future cell she clearly exclaimed: "the Trinity is here!" and precisely in Its honour she wanted to be called *Elizabeth of the Trinity*.

It was a devotion certainly not improvised. Already years ear-

lier, while waiting to reach the age of majority, it would be a Dominican priest who introduced her to this Trinitarian perspective and taught her to pray to the Trinity and worship them, not as individuals but as the Three Together, precisely: the Trinity. And in contemplation and adoration of this mystery of the Trinity of love, Elizabeth was able to find peace and strength to endure that terrible illness which she once confided to her superior that had brought her to the brink of suicide. But she overcame that crisis with the thought that God was always present in her and looked on her with infinite love and always held her by the hand.

Elizabeth too, after the example of another compatriot and Carmelite too, Therese of Lisieux, (after reading *the Story of a Soul*), she left many hundreds of poems, meditations for spiritual retreats and tracts on the Trinity; not sufficient to be a teacher of the spiritual life, but sufficient for those who were starved.

A final note, from the same mother superior: "Her whole life was not concentrated on one point. And at the end of her last meeting, she had the courage to tell me: "Mother, when a nun comes to warn you that I have stopped suffering, you must fall on your knees and say: "My God, you have given her to me and now I give her back to you. Blessed be your Holy Name!"

So on November 9, 1906 Elizabeth went to live forever in heaven that mystery of Infinite Trinitarian love that she already loved and contemplated while she was here on earth. □



THE LAST DAYS

by Ian Pinto, sdb

All things come to an end. Every organism is born, lives and then dies. Things or situations come into existence and after a while go out of it, sometimes just as quickly. This is what philosophers and mystics call *temporality*. Existence is temporary. No one can claim to live forever. The world is hardly engineered for eternal existence. The Buddha was grasped wholly by this insight and built up a spirituality around it. He compares life to a flowing river. It's continuously flowing such that at no point is the water in the river the same. From here he picks out the now famous dictum, "You can't step into the same river twice". But as we know, rivers have their source and finally end up in the sea or ocean which is figuratively their end. They have the possibility of drying up and so their existence is never fully certain. It's there now, it may not be the next moment. The same is true of life in general. One minute you're alive the next you might just drop dead.

Time binds all things – except

God and the spiritual world, and that is the reason they have definite life spans. God on the other hand, is eternal. He has no beginning; he lives but doesn't age and can never die. Many of us would imagine God as a nice old man with a rich flowing white beard and long hair, perhaps an image we have unconsciously generated from Michelangelo's masterpiece on the ceiling of the Sistine chapel. God is formless; for our convenience we imagine him to look like this or that. God has revealed his form to us in Jesus, and therefore Jesus becomes the image of God for us. The images we know of Jesus depict a young handsome man but we must remember that it is only a symbol – a pointer to a God who is neither young nor old but simply beyond time itself.

Time is a neutral party. It is the same to all. One regret many people have is "if I had more time...." That is quite sad. No one can have 'more time'. That's why it's absolutely critical to make good use of the time one has, it will never return once it's

gone. No one can buy more time no matter how rich one is – time simply is. Jesus ushers a warning about the end times and doesn't paint a very rosy picture.

COSMIC BLOT

He foretells a period of darkness. This period will be preceded by a time of disaster and destruction (Mk 13:24). But what kind of disaster he fails to say. The darkness that will spread is quite a morose, morbid and anaerobic type. "The sun will grow dark, the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall out of the sky, and the whole universe will be shaken" (Mk 13:24-25). Not very consoling is it? One can imagine the fear, anxiety and stress those days will cause.

Actually we don't have to look very far. It seems like those days are already upon us. Think of the innumerable reports being published of the depleting state of the environment; of violence of various and horrendous types; of natural calamities; of new and hybrid diseases. The sun is getting darker. The light and goodness of the world is dimming under the over-powering blanket of evil. Evil seems to be winning the fight. A blot of cosmic size is making its way across the plane of existence. Is there hope or are we doomed to an apocalyptic future? I'm not a fan of science fiction movies but could they be indicators of our future world?

DIVINE RADIANCE

Jesus doesn't leave us hanging. He is not a pessimist. He speaks of reality but always proffers hope. Here too, he assures that "people will see the Son of Man

coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And he will send the angels to gather his chosen people from the ... ends of the earth to the ends of the sky" (Mk 13:26-27). In spite of the darkness around, he promises to come as 'light to the world'. Darkness and evil may seem to have surrounded us but those who resist them to the end will be blessed with eternal rewards. All earthly things are temporal and so is evil. It can be resisted and overcome. One must brace oneself and draw on one's inner resources and Divine intervention to fight evil.



Jesus won't leave us alone. He promised to be with us through thick and thin: "I am with you always, even to the end of this world" (Mt 28:20). His light and grace will help see us through our darkest valleys of temptation, sin and evil and up the rugged mountains of honesty, goodness and piety so that on the day of His coming we will be there at the peak beholding the mighty splendor of his arrival with the words of Paul on our lips: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness with which the Lord, the just judge, will reward me" (2 Tim 4:7-8). □

Quiet Spaces

IN THE SURE HANDS OF GOD

On the morning of November 12, 2013, the Holy Father celebrated Mass Casa Santa Marthae. The following is the edited English text of the Pope's homily which was delivered in Italian.

In God's hands we find our true security. They are hands wounded by love, and they guide us along the path of life. This was the heart of the homily Pope Francis delivered during the Holy Mass he celebrated at the Chapel of Santa Marta.

The Holy Father commented on the first Reading of the day, taken from the Book of Wisdom (2:23-3:9), which states that "God created man for incorruption and made him in the image of his own eternity." "He made us and he is our Father," Pope Francis said. "He made us beautiful as he is beautiful, more beautiful than the angels, greater than the angels."

The devil envied the greatness and beauty of God's rational creature, and "through the devil's envy, death entered the world." The devil "could not endure that man be superior to him, that man and woman be made in the image and likeness of God. This is why he made war on them" and laid before them "a road that leads to death."

And yet "the Lord does not abandon the work of his hands," the Pope observed. As Wisdom says, "the souls of the just are in the hands of God." The Pope continued: "We all have to pass through death. Yet it is one thing to pass through this in the hands of the devil, and



November 2018

quite another to pass through it in the hands of God."

"I love to listen to these words: we are in the hands of God. And this was so from the very beginning. The Bible uses a beautiful image to explain our creation: God who with his hands forms us out of mud, out of the

clay of the earth, into his image and likeness. It was God's hands that fashioned us: God the artist."

And therefore, God does not abandon us. "God," Pope Francis said, acts "like a father with his child and takes him by the hand. God's hands accompany us on our journey." The Father "teaches us how to walk, how to travel on the road of life and salvation". And our Father caresses us, he loves us so much. And oftentimes in these caresses we also find forgiveness."

"It does us great good to think: Jesus, God still bears his wounds. He shows them to the Father. This is the price: the hands of God are hands pierced by love. And this brings us great comfort. How many times have we heard it said: I don't know who to trust, all the doors are closed, I shall entrust myself to the hands of God! And this is beautiful, because it is there that we rest secure."

Pope Francis concluded: "Let us think about the hands of God,



who fashioned us as an artist. He has given us eternal life. They are pierced hands. They accompany us along the path of life. Let us entrust ourselves to the hands of God as a child entrusts himself to his father." (By L'Ossevatore Romano, Weekly ed. in English, n. 46, November 15, 2013) □

November 2018

THE KING'S SON

From Fr. Ian Doulton's collection of stories

This is a parable for today. Read it carefully because hidden in plain sight is the secret for a successful life.

There once was a king whose subjects fell sick of a great plague. No physician could cure them. The king called a meeting of all his councilors and his physicians. They gathered together in the great hall but they could think of nothing until one of the physicians – the oldest and the wisest of them all, stood up and said: "Majesty, there is but one remedy for this sickness." The king said nervously: "What is it? Bring it to me." "That, I may not do your majesty," the elderly physician ventured, "nor any except the bravest and best in your kingdom, for this remedy lies over the mountains and across the desert. Furthermore it is kept in the stronghold of our most savage enemy. He who would bring it must endure perils of the land and of the sea and he may not be sent at your command but must go freely of his own will."

The king sent heralds with trumpets and they called his knights together. When they were all assembled the king said to them: "There is only one remedy for this sickness which is afflicting my people. It lies over the mountains and across the desert; in the stronghold of our most savage enemy. He who brings it must endure perils of the land and of the sea. I may not command any man to go, but this journey must be of his own free will. Which of you

will ride to save my people? To him who ventures, I will give a share in my kingdom. Will anyone go?"

There was some restlessness in the great hall. Then all of a sudden a hand rose and the king looked up. It was his son! A hush fell over the entire assembly and the boy spoke: "I will go and, not for a share in your kingdom, for that I already have..." The king tried to dissuade him but he boldly added: "Father, our people are dying... For love of them, I will go."

The king relented. He ordered his stewards to give him the best armour in his kingdom and the finest horse. They provided him with shield of bronze and sword of steel and the sharpest lance in the king's armoury. And he sent out heralds with trumpets to the four corners of his kingdom to tell all the people that his son was riding forth to save them at peril of his life.

Many days and many nights the king waited for his son's return. He had watchmen posted in the towers above the gates to give him word when they saw his son approaching. Finally a message came from the watchman on the tower to the East. The counsellor reported to the king: "Majesty, the watchman has seen a man coming on the road that runs over the mountain..." The king was eager to see his son but the messenger went on: "No, majesty; this man is nothing like your son. He is some poor beggar who comes along leaning on a stick." The king

wouldn't believe it: "But he comes from over the mountains and he may have word of my son. Send out guards quickly and have him brought here to me," said the king.

The guards went and brought in the man and he stood before the king. Dust from the road covered him and blood from many wounds. But when the king had gazed on him he gave a great cry: "My son!" Exhausted and weak the lad stretched out his hand with a little pouch: "Father, I have brought the remedy."

The king wasn't even looking at the proffered hand, he only gazed in shock and amazement at his son, so weak and bruised. His son collapsed in the arms of his father and told him that he had endured many enemies.

The king summoned his staff: "Stewards, take him to my bed chamber. Summon the royal physicians and send out heralds to the four corners of my kingdom. Tell them to announce to all the people: my son has returned with the remedy for their ills. They have only to come to my palace to receive it and be cured."

The herald went as the king had commanded. He rode to the valleys, to the country places. He sounded a trumpet and he announced to all the people: "The king's son has returned with the remedy for the plague. Come to the palace and be cured."

But the people were out in the fields and they said they simply couldn't come; they were planting their crops. It was the season. The herald was shocked and pleaded: "But the plague is among you. If you don't come who will be left to eat the harvest?" But

they were adamant and insisted that they had to remain there because it was the season to plant their crops.

The herald left them and rode up into the hills, to the small villages. He announced to all the people: "The king's son has returned with the remedy for the plague. Come to the palace and be cured." The village seemed to be in a buzz. People were decorating the streets and washing and they were busy...there was excitement written large on their faces. They said they couldn't come to the palace since there was a wedding in the town. It was going to be a wedding like no other. The groom is the richest man in town. He had roasted such beefs and ordered a cellar full of wine. The people are from all the villages around were going to be there. They were too excited: They simply looked up at the herald and exclaimed: "Oh, you spoil our feast with your croaking. We'll think about that later. There never has been such a wedding."

The herald then rode to the towns along the river. He announced to all the people:

"The king's son has returned with the remedy for the plague. Come to the palace and be cured." But they seemed very somber and everyone was speaking in whispers. They said they couldn't come to the palace. They had a funeral to attend and then mourn for the deceased. He was held in high regard and was a great benefactor of their town. The previous year he had built them a fine hall and recently he even dug them a new

well. This time the herald used a more severe tone and said: "But, what of your duty to the king who has even let his own son risk his life to save you from death." But the people simply said that the family of the deceased lived in their town and so did they. Their loyalty was first to their recently deceased benefactor.

The herald rode to the plains where a great city stood. But the gates of the city were shut and barred and armed men stood watch. The herald sounded his trumpet until the citizens crowded to the walls. The mayor and his wife came down to the gate and the herald called: "The king's son has returned with the remedy for the plague, come to the palace and be cured." The mayor said through the bars: "To the palace, three day's journey?" The herald warned them: "Start at once to save your lives."

But the wife of the mayor piped in: "Oh but we're safe here. Indeed, we have no plague. We've shut the gates. We've thrown away the bad food. We've admitted no one from the outside." The herald tried to convince them, but they wouldn't listen. He even told them: "In my journeys I have passed half a dozen cities, their gates shut and their people lying dead of the plague within." But they were so content with their wise mayor and felt so secure within their city walls, that they sent the herald on his way.

The herald returned from the four corners of the kingdom and he reported what the people had said. All this time, the king's son,

from the bed where he lay asked often how the people were faring. He wanted to know if anyone had come. The king could see his son sinking when he realized that no one had come to take the remedy. The king summoned the oldest and the wisest of the physicians – the one who had first given word of the remedy and asked how serious was his son's condition; to which the wizened old physician replied: "Majesty, we have used all our knowledge and our skill but his wounds are too many and too deep." The king's face fell: "He is dying," he whispered. The old man nodded.

The king came out of his bed chamber and called his courtiers: "I will send out a new herald. I will announce to all the people how my son returned covered with wounds and blood; how he has loved them even unto death. They will hear that he brought back the remedy at the cost of his life. They will receive it and be saved."

The king sent out a new herald who did as he commanded. He went to all the cities and the towns and the country places and told all the people that the King's son had brought back the remedy at the cost of his life. A few people came to the palace; humble folk, working men, some widows and some orphans. Then the herald returned and reported to the chief counselor; the counselor went to the king. He found him with the royal physician outside the room where his son lay.

He reported the news: "Majesty, the people were in great sorrow when they heard the news. The

people of the country will come soon, then those of the villages are making plans. The townsmen and those of the cities will come before too long..."

There was much murmuring outside the bed chamber and the king was pacing up and down with his physician. Then above the murmurs he heard his son's voice: "Father, father..." Staying the physician with his hand, he said: "My son calls, wait here." Once more he inquired of the king, his father, if people had come to receive the remedy. The king tried to pacify him: "Rest my son, rest." The poor boy said weakly: "How many have come, father, how many? I cannot sleep father, nor take any rest until you tell me."

The father said softly: "A few working men came, some widows and some orphans."

Looking into the face of his saddened father he asked again: "What of the rest, father? What of the rest? They did not come?" There was a groan and two tears rolled down the boy's pale cheeks. The king asked: "Physician, what was that?"

"That was his heart breaking," said the old man.

For three days and three nights the king mourned his son. Then he ordered his councilors and his physicians to assemble, to learn his will concerning the remedy for the plague. The councilors and the physicians gathered in the great hall of the palace. There was much discussion and embarrassment: "The king will surely punish his people severely," said one. "He should send out soldiers to burn their

houses and trample their fields," said another. "Better still, he should lock away the remedy; leave them to die in their misery." Then all of a sudden the king appeared and ascended his throne. A hush fell over the entire gathering. In a firm but grave voice the king spoke: "This is my will and my command concerning the remedy for the plague. The people of this kingdom have earned my displeasure and my just wrath but I will stay my hand because my son loved them. And he loved them even unto the end. The remedy will remain free to all, for such is the wish of my son; his dying wish. Some will come and take it and they will grow strong again. They will grow beautiful. They will prove that my son had not died in vain."

This story is a parable. The king of course is God the Father, his son is Christ the Lord. The people of the kingdom are all of us. Our plague is the virus of sin and the weakness of our own human nature. They threaten our souls with everlasting death and we can be cured only by the grace of God. This remedy Christ our Lord earned for us by dying on the cross. It's ours for the praying, for the turning to God, yet how often do we put off receiving it for excuses as fantastic and as foolish as those of the people in the story? We're too busy or too worried or trying too hard to have a good time and all the while we're running the risk of losing the happy destiny that God has prepared for us. How can we take a chance when we know that Christ our Lord has provided this joy for all of us at the cost of his life? □

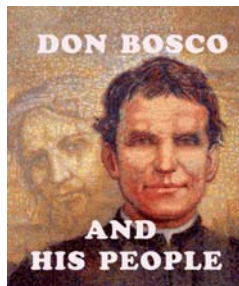
THE SENSE OF GOD

by Natale Cerrato

In November 1846 Don Bosco's mother, at the age of 58 left her home in Becchi to share with her son a life of deprivation and sacrifice for the children of the suburbs of Turin. She was there for about four years and she felt her strength fail. A great weariness penetrated her bones and an intense nostalgia in her heart. She entered Don Bosco's room and she said: "I can't go on like this. Everyday the boys are up to some new mischief. Now they throw all the laundry on the ground or they trample the vegetables in the garden. They tear their clothes and they're impossible to patch up any longer. They lose their socks and shirts. They take the tools of the house for their games and I've got to look for them all the time and in the midst of this confusion, I lose my temper. I'm almost, almost... I'm going back to Becchi." Don Bosco stared at his mother without saying a word. Then he pointed to the Crucifix hanging on the wall. Mamma Margaret understood. Her eyes were filled with tears: "You're right, you're right!" She said and went back to work. From that moment, not a word of complaint escaped her lips.

This episode is as well-known as it is significant in that it reveals the sense of faith that permeated the life of Mamma Margaret.

Christian mothers in Piedmont in the past nourished a profound devotion to the Passion of Christ, to that Cross which gave meaning, strength and hope to all their crosses. For the mother of Don Bosco it was enough to look at the Crucifix and she went back to her



work with her son with renewed ardour. Six years later, on November 25, 1856, Don Bosco's orphans lost their adopted mother who, for ten years had replaced their mothers and through her kindness and concern was able to make them forget what they had lost.

The mother, (after the death of her husband) assumed the entire burden of the family and she was an incomparable educator of her children. In her own inimitable way of putting things she instilled in their young hearts "a lively awareness of the presence of God, a spontaneous admiration for his creation, a gratitude for his blessings, a conformity to his will and a fear of offending him." She knew how to take every occasion that presented itself during the day to remind her children of the motto: "God sees you." She used the grandeur and power of nature to remind them of the Creator.

On a starry night sitting in the courtyard of the house she would look up to the heavens and say: "It is God who created the world and

put so many stars up there."

At the burst of spring, before a flowery meadow or before a rosy sunset she would exclaim: "How many beautiful things the Lord has done for us!" At the roar of thunder in a storm she would say: "How powerful is the Lord, and who can resist Him?" When hail ruined the crops she would say: "The Lord has given and the Lord has taken away, he is the master!" If the crops were abundant: "Let us thank the Lord. How good he has been to us, giving us our daily bread!"

In winter, when everyone sat around the fire and the wind howled outside or the snow fell she would make them reflect saying: "How grateful should we be to God. He is a Father who provides for all our needs."

Although Mamma Margaret was illiterate she possessed the wisdom of Christian mothers of old. The sense faith, so vivid in the mother of Don Bosco, was not a rare quality among the people of Piedmont. One doesn't have to go back so far to discover deep traces of it. It may be sufficient to examine the language of Christian mothers of a time close to our own. We used some field research, interviewing ordinary people to obtain some testimonies on this aspect of popular Piedmontese culture.

The author prefers to jealously refer to preserved documents, namely the letters of his mother, Maria Aghemo, a commoner from Turin, Borgo Po (1892-1960). Here are some excerpts presented in chronological order.

November 23, 1937: "Let his Holy Will be done, now and always."

September 12, 1942: "Look, when

you have some opposition or discouragement or other, never think of the opinions of men but only of the judgment of God. I tell you think only because it is so overwhelming for me to reflect and when I do so I remain calm and serene. You too should remain calm and cheerful. The Lord is with us."

January 1946: "Nothing but the good is made to last."

August 3, 1949: "Don't worry that Paradise is wonderful and we will be together forever. It is made for those who want it, isn't it true? You know better than I."

January 27, 1954: "Lacking strength, trust. My only means is always prayer."

April 13, 1955: "Do only what is best for your soul; for the rest, do what you can."

August 3, 1955: "Providence will always help us; without problems you can't stand."

October 24, 1959: "May God be thanked for such goodness to us."

These are simple words habitually on the lips of humble people to whom God gave the wisdom of the Saints. They are words that reveal a whole way of thinking that is deeply religious and truthful perhaps anywhere in the world, but typically in Piedmont of our ancestors. Piedmontese tradition and culture have always been characterized by their religious roots and it was the faith of Christian mothers that nourished these roots. Because of this the nineteenth century had a rich crop of saints.

John Bosco, attributed everything to his mother, he would breathe the Monferrato environment. He, who always had for his mother the greatest respect, repro-

duced in himself her deep religious meaning of life.

One scholar of the saint said: "Like the sun at midday God dominated the mind of Don Bosco." It is a fact that is very easy to document. Don Bosco had God at the centre of his thoughts.

A man of action, but first of all a man of prayer. He remembers that it was his mother who taught him to pray, to converse with God: "She herself taught me to pray. As soon as I was old enough, to join my brothers, she made me kneel with them morning and evening. We would all recite our prayers together."

When John was forced to leave his maternal home and go as a farmhand to the Moglia farm, prayer was his already his sustenance and comfort. In that Moncuoco house "he fulfilled his duties as a good Christian with the regularity of older servants well accustomed to work on the farm and to the demands of country life at the time." But John was already doing something more: he was praying on his knees, praying often, praying for long periods. Even outside the home, as he led the cows to pasture, he would pause occasionally to pray. To the old head of the family who reproached him one day when he forgot his work to pray, he replied: "You know well that I don't spare myself when it comes to work. However, it is certain that we gain more from prayer than from work. If we pray we sow two seeds and reap four ears of corn; if we don't pray we sow four and reap two."

His mother had also instilled in him a tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin. As a student in

Castelnuovo he often went to visit the church of Our Lady of the Castello (*Madonna del Castello*) which stood out high above the countryside. When he came to Turin he took the boys of his wandering oratory to the shrines of Our Lady of Consolation and other popular Marian shrines.

On entering the seminary his mother had told him: "When you came into the world, I consecrated you to the Blessed Virgin. When you began your studies, I recommend to you devotion to this Mother of ours. Now I say to you, be completely hers; love those of your companions who have devotion to Mary; and if you become a priest, always preach and promote devotion to Mary." That Don Bosco had put this maternal advice into practice is well known and the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin is a constant testimony of this.

Having become a priest and starting his work among youngsters he called his work the 'Oratory.' It is not without reason that the driving force behind all his work should be called the 'Main activity.' The title indicates the main activity, the main purpose of an enterprise.

And Don Bosco explained: "I gave this house the name Oratory in order to show clearly that prayer is the only power on which we should rely." He had no other power at his disposal to animate his oratories, to start his boardings, to solve his problems of daily bread and to lay the foundations of his congregation. We know that so many even doubted his sanity.

Michael Rua attests: "Observing Don Bosco's actions, even the

least important of them, made more impression on me than reading or meditating on some pious book." In fact, his manner was that of a person who lived constantly in the presence of God, vigilant and attentive in serving him alone, and again Michael Rua refers to Don Bosco using the same words that we reported about Mamma Margaret: "Sometimes when I accompanied him as he went to rest late at night, he would stop to contemplate the starry sky and remain there, forgetful of his tiredness, talking about the immensity, omnipotence and wisdom of God."

He always kept alive in everyone the hope of salvation. Cardinal John Cagliero affirms: "He spoke of heaven so vividly and so effusively as to fascinate anyone who heard him." One witness who knew him well says that if someone asked him straight out, "Where are we going," Don Bosco would answer point blank, "we're going to heaven!"

In the trials of life he always looked at things from the rooftops, even in the most serious misfortunes. On January 24, 1885 during the solemn farewell lunch for the missionaries, a fire broke out in the workshop of the binders not far from where the luggage of the departing missionaries was.

You know how upset people get in such circumstances. Everyone leaped up from the table. Don Bosco, far from being indifferent to the disaster did not leave the refectory. He stood there in silence and absorbed, while the others were busy. Every now and again he asked if any youngsters were in danger,

if there were any injuries. Hearing that there were no injuries he fell back into his recollection.

When they told him that the damage amounted to one hundred thousand lire he exclaimed: "That is serious! But the Lord has given, the Lord has taken away. He is the Master," the very words of his mother.

One of Don Bosco's most successful and widespread writings was his Church History. Compiled in 1847 it came to be used in Salesian schools for over a century, it went into dozens of editions and reprints. The first characteristic of the Church History of Don Bosco is its theocentric catechesis. God is always represented at the centre of everything and everyone as an infinitely great and powerful Creator who governs the world and in whose hands lies the life and death of every man. He is infinitely good and just rewarding the good and punishing the wicked in this life and the next. Each event of the history of the Chosen People, like every event of human life is presented in the light of God who guides human events so that evil will definitely never prevail over good. For Don Bosco all of human history is Sacred History, a history of salvation destined to take man back to the Father's House.

This sense of God which permeated all the writings and work of Don Bosco was evidence of the life of his people. The holiness of Don Bosco was drawn from the divine source of grace and was modelled on Christ the master of all perfection but he was rooted the permanent spiritual values of his land. □



MARY, MOTHER OF MERCY

by Angelo di Maria

Do not be afraid, Mary" (Lk. 1, 30) Do not be afraid! God knows us deeply. He knows the difficulties, the dangers and the impossible situations we experience. That is why he reminds us; "Nothing is impossible to God" (Lk 1:37), nothing is impossible for him who is Father, who has loved us from all eternity and has sent his Son in time to become a human being like us: Jesus who on the cross forgave and rose and gave us a sign of hope.

All too often, or because we've not always been educated in an optimistic Christian vision of life or because the experiences around us have conditioned us, we have cultivated in our hearts a mistaken concept of God; we are used to thinking of a strict God, a controller always ready to punish us. This is not the God who says: "Do not be afraid," Jesus revealed to us the true face of God: a Father who loves us.

This God who loves everyone, presents Mary to us as a sign of his love. He - who as Jesus said: "clothes the lilies of the field, feeds the birds of the air (Mt 6:28) never deprives anyone who is in need

and awaits us one day in eternal glory. He offers us a sign of his love: Jesus the Risen Saviour and he wants Mary to help us to more easily be recipients of salvation.

THE HUMAN BEING HAS A PLAN OF LOVE

Christian life is a journey in love and with love towards God. Otherwise, it is no longer the Christian life. Where there is hatred, resentment and enmity there is no God. Even in the difficulties of everyday life, the Lord offers us love as the way and the fundamental means. At the same time love is our travelling companion. The Christian life is a life of love enabling us to reach God who is Love.

The father and mother are signs for the children of the Mercy of God because they teach the children how to love, to respect and to live in solidarity the Christian experience. Each of us in the most common situations of life is a sign of this mercy. When we alleviate the sufferings of the poor or dry the tears of those who weep or comfort the distressed or show the way to those lost or when we

pray for the salvation of everyone and above all when we proclaim the Word, that's when we become signs of mercy because we become instruments through whom the Lord brings his love to everyone.

But we need to be available to God: being his collaborators is not something optional but a serious commitment. Each of us can say 'no.' God will still carry out his plan of salvation but we will have wasted an opportunity that has been given to us to put our lives at his disposal because through us so many others, - only God knows, could have been helped to achieve salvation.

MARY IS A SIGN OF GOD'S LOVE

Mary was a sign of God's Mercy and love because through her 'yes' she wanted to be a totally docile instrument in his hands. Through Mary, mercy has come into the world for everyone. Even if we have committed the most shameful sins Jesus is forgiveness, mercy and redemption. Mary, the mother of Jesus, is the mother of Mercy.

It was not easy for Mary to realize this task which the angel announced to her: "Behold you will conceive a Son" (Lk 1:31) the angels tell her, but she does not know where she will give birth, no one will welcome her, who carries Mercy in her bosom. She flees to Egypt, returning to live a simple life in Nazareth for thirty years. Then there are three years of public life and preaching in which Jesus, the Father's Mercy is neither accepted nor loved.

Yet Mary goes on giving Him to men. At Cana: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5); beneath the cross she accepts John as a son (Jn



19L26-27) and she welcomes all of us even those who at that time were killing, abusing, and mistreating Jesus. Under the cross all of us became the children of Mary, the mother of the Mercy of God.

No one has ever turned to Mary and been disappointed. God wanted and wants each of us to turn to her, to obtain more easily those graces that are necessary for each of us. We must have the courage to believe this truth.

Let us be assured: to turn to Mary is not a sign of weakness but of fortitude, because through her we know that we will surely and expediently reach Jesus our Saviour.

In icons, Mary always has the child in her arms and she seems to say: "Don't look at me, but at my son, because he is the Mercy of the Father. I have just come to show him to you, to give him to you. Do not be afraid. Have you sinned? Jesus is forgiveness. Do you not know where to go? Jesus is the way the truth and the life." (Jn 14:6) □

GAMBELLA, ETHIOPIA

In Ethiopia, the region of Gambella, on the border with South Sudan, is burdened by many problems - poverty, strong ethnic tensions, lack of industry and infrastructure - but not by the relationship between Christians and Muslims. "Here religion is not a reason for division. The cohabitation among the faithful is serene. And we are very happy about it", says Father Aristide Marcandalli. Salesian, 53, he arrived in Ethiopia 25 years ago.

The schools

In Gambella Father Aristide is parish priest of the cathedral and, together with two fellow Salesians, he coordinates the Don Bosco Technical College, a professional institute attended by 150 young people, and another school. The oratory, which also offers a popular football school, over the years has become a point of reference for over 1,500 youngsters. Father Aristide points out: "The Salesian educational system promotes integration, respect and acceptance of diversity and this contributes to building that peaceful coexistence.

The refugee camps

The arrival of people from South Sudan fleeing violence, poverty and deprivation is impressive in the Gambella region. The Salesians work in the four refugee camps, providing spiritual assistance and training: vocational college teachers give short intensive courses (e.g. carpentry and mechanics) to the refugees to enable them to start small businesses.



The help of Muslims

Father Aristide, who has several Muslim friends, says he has received help on more than one occasion from people of Islamic faith: "For example, years ago we were called by a small Catholic community to open a mission in an area with a Muslim majority and it was precisely the Muslim authorities - knowing our needs - who offered us the land on which to build the chapel and our structures. I was very impressed with their availability".

The Muslim Friend

Among Father Aristide Marcandalli's Muslim friends there is Nuriye Yesufed: 30 year old, married and father of a child, he works as secretary at the "Don Bosco Technical College" after having taught computer science there. Here, he says, he always felt well, he felt welcomed "like a family member" since he crossed the threshold of the school as an 18-year-old student. I really like working with the Salesians because I share their mission: the integral education of young people, an education that offers them the indispensable tools to build a good life. *Cristina Ugucioni, La Stampa, 18/06*



walking
with
the Church

A Follow-up on Masses on Saturday Evenings

Fr. Edward McNamara

Q. My difficulty is the following. Why does the Catechism of the Catholic Church not mention the situation of those that are required to work on Sunday, at least in that part which you referred to in your reply.

A. I did not refer to this aspect in my reply, as the main thrust of the question was elsewhere. The questions addressed by our reader are treated in Canons 1247 and 1248 in the Code of Canon Law.

Canon 1247 states the obligation to assist at Mass on Sundays, while No. 1248 Subsection 2 says that if assistance at Mass is impossible due to the lack of a minister, or for some other grave cause, then it is recommended that the faithful assist at the Liturgy of the Word if this is celebrated in the parish church.

The sense of canon law is clear. Assistance at Mass is obligatory, except for a "grave cause." The use of the expression "grave cause" indicates that the obligation is a very serious one. For obligations that admit more readily to exceptions, canon law usually uses expressions such as "a just cause."

These norms apply the canonical and moral principle "*ad*

impossibilia nemo tenetur" (no-body is obliged to do the impossible): When an objective impossibility exists, then the consequent obligation disappears. For this reason the Church recommends, but does not oblige, that Catholics sanctify Sunday in some other way, such as assisting at a Communion service, following a televised Mass, or praying at home.

An objective impossibility need not always be a dramatic situation. Examples of objective impossibility could be age, illness, the need to care for a sick relation, or seasonal variations which make leaving home a hazardous task. Catholics involved in necessary Sunday occupations such as police, medical personnel and flight attendants are also exempt while on duty.

It is not always easy to judge what is objective, as conditions vary from person to person. However, Catholics should not be too light in assessing their difficulties and should be willing to make reasonable sacrifices to assist at Mass.

They should, if possible, attend a Saturday evening Mass, or at least strive to sanctify the Sunday in some other way. □

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

The Vital Test

Quiz Master: How many successful jumps must a paratrooper make before he graduates?"

Contestant: "All of them!"

Green Consciousness

The old man went in to look at caskets. "Which is better," he asked, "a metal one or an oak one?" "Well," replied the clerk anxious to please, "the metal one would last longer, but undoubtedly the oak one would be healthier."

Pavlov in Reverse

One rat, recently returned to his cage, ran to a fellow rat and exclaimed: "You know, I've got Dr. Zilch conditioned!"

"How so?" asked his colleague. "Well," replied the first rat, "every time I press the bar he gives me food."

Horse-sense

A minister was driving through the country when suddenly his motor stopped. He got out of the car and raised the hood to see if he could locate the trouble.

All at once a voice behind him said: "the trouble is the carburettor."

Quickly he turned around in surprise, he saw only an old horse standing on the other side of the fence watching him. Hardly daring to believe his ears, he asked, "Did you say something?"

"Yes, I did, you'd better check the carburettor," replied the horse.

Rushing down the road to the

nearest farmhouse, the minister excitedly related his experience to the old farmer who answered the door. "Was it an old bay horse with one flop ear?" asked the farmer.

"Yes, yes, that's the one!"

"Well, don't pay any attention to him," the farmer scoffed. "He don't know anything about automobiles anyway."

Precidence of Mind

A quick thinking employee came up with a new one when his foreman demanded. "How come you're sleeping on the job?"

"Goodness," replied the employee, "can't a man close his eyes for a minute of prayer?"

Lying like hell

A man testifying in a court told such evident untruths that the judge intervened. "See here," he admonished, "you must tell the truth in this courtroom. Do you know what will happen if you continue to lie like this?"

"I suppose I'll go to hell," replied the witness.

"Yes, of course," said the judge. "But what else will happen to you?" The man thought a moment. "Isn't that enough?"

Finders keepers

The fussy boss strolled down the aisle among the desks. He saw a cigarette butt lying on the floor.

"Is that yours?" he growled at the meek man nearest him. "No," said the little man. "You can have it... you saw it first!" □

MY WORDS WILL NOT PASS AWAY

by Marco Bonatti

Being aware of how the world functions is wise and important by the criteria by which we live lies "beyond," outside the world itself. The day and the time of the end does not belong to us.

"But in those days following the distress, the sun will grow dark, the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall out of the skies and the powers in the whole universe will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And he will send the angels to gather his chosen people from the four winds, from the ends of earth to the ends of the sky.

Learn a lesson from the fig tree. As soon as its branches become tender and it begins to sprout leaves, you know that summer is near. In the same way, when you see these things happening, know that he is near, even at the door. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all this has happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. But, regarding that Day and that Hour, no one knows when it will come, not even the angels, not even the son but only the Father. (Mark 13:24-32)

For the people of the first generations of the Church, waiting for the end times was an important element of the life of the early Christian Community; the promise of Jesus' return was lived and interpreted as immanent. Again in those early centuries, Christ was portrayed not so much as crucified, on a crucifix, but as the "Glorious Lord," at his resurrection - indeed - at the final judgment.

The anxiety of waiting for the Lord's return has remained a constant in the life of the Church down the centuries and even today. For us believers it is that ultimate reference point that gives definitive meaning to the existence of the world. The answer to the question about the meaning of the world lies not in the world. Waiting for the Lord's return also

means recognizing oneself as incompatible with this world, living this life as a temporary abode.

The world is neither eternal nor self-sufficient. This revelation highlights a huge difference between Christians and "others" for two important reasons. The first: The "foundation" of life lies not in the world, nor in faith. Knowing how the world works is useful and important but the "rules of life," the criteria by which to live lie "beyond," outside the world itself. The second reason: the day and the hour of the end do not belong to us, and they are not even part of the revelation given us by Jesus Christ.

GRATUITUOUS LOVE

To accept this perspective has considerable consequences. If the world is not the rule of life, if it is

not eternal, it does not contain the truth about life. The Lord came to proclaim a gratuitous love (contrary to love as a need) and that one can even give up one's life out of love. If however the need for material life is not the standard rule, it also means that none of the things of this world are "sacred" in themselves. But the laws and powers of economics or politics mean even less. Obviously the Lord does not deny nature and its laws but that they rather strengthen the First Commandment, which proclaims the sovereignty of God over all other realities. The laws (natural and social) must be known and respected but they are also subject to God.

LIVING LIKE PAGANS, OR NOT

We almost live like pagans most of the time; calling for God's help only when we're in need, but then as we follow the rules we know

and "recognize," i.e. those of the world.

The statement that the day and time does not depend on us or even on Jesus Christ means remembering some other things: that we speak not so much of a cosmic conclusion, but rather, a certain and concrete end and closure of our own individual biological life. First of all, we are called to think of and prepare ourselves for this death. For this reason, we are called "to read the signs of the times and seasons" so that we come to understand that "summer is coming" and the Lord is near.

When this world "passes away," that is, even when we have passed away, the word of the Lord will remain as the only sure sign and compass of hope. It is not ours to "change the rules of the world" but to walk with God along the path that Jesus has taught: of gratuitous love. □



THEY ARE GRATEFUL TO OUR LADY AND DON BOSCO

A million thanks to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Our Lady and my dear patron saint, St. Anthony of Padua for the numerous favours received through their intercession. May they continue to bless my family and protect us always.

Jubel D'Cruz, Mumbai
I prayed fervently and made a Novena to Mary Help of Christians to bless my children with the gift of parenthood. On the feast day of Our Lady Help of Christians, May 24, 2017, my daughter called and gave me the good news that she was expecting a baby. In January 2018, my daughter gave birth to a healthy baby girl. Our grateful thanks to Our Heavenly Father, Our Lady Help of Christians and St. Dominic Savio for this wonderful gift. May Our Lord continue to bless and protect our family always. *Mrs. H. D'Souza, Australia*
Our sincere thanks to Our Lady for all the favours received: health, finance and a job for my son. *Mrs. Bertha Mendonca, Mumbai*
Many thanks to Mother Mary for answering my prayer.

Margaret Soans, Kalyan
My sincere thanks to Mamma Margaret, the mother of Don Bosco for curing me of my 'skin problem'. I had the good fortune to visit Becchi, (Italy) the house where she lived. *A.C. Sebastian, Mumbai*

THE DEVOTION OF THE THREE HAIL MARYS



The devotion of the THREE HAIL MARYS is a very simple yet most efficacious devotion. Everyday, recite Three Hail Marys, adding the invocation: "O Mary, My Mother, keep me from mortal sin." Many people recite the Three Hail Marys as part of their morning and night prayers. To practise this devotion in time of danger, stress, special need or temptation, is a sure means to obtain Our Lady's help.

My sincere thanks to Mother Mary, through the recitation of the 3 Hail Marys my husband's problems were solved. *Mavis Viegas*

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

NOVEMBER 2018

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MARY WAS THERE

On May 16th May 2018, we were returning by car to Mumbai after a short trip to Kerala. My son was in the front seat with me, our seat belts on, while his wife was in the back seat. Around noon, we met with an accident. The car turned turtle and we were trapped inside. Bystanders immediately rushed to our aid and freed us from the wreckage. My son and I were untouched but my daughter-in-law sustained injuries. On reaching Mumbai on the third day she was admitted to Holy Family Hospital where she was promptly attended to and discharged. Everyone was astonished at our miraculous escape. I firmly believe that our lives were spared from what could have been a fatal accident only through the intercession of Mother Mary and the prayers of our loved ones.

Fred Fernandes, Mumbai

Don Bosco's Madonna, has developed to its present form from a folder published in 1937, by late Fr Aurelius Maschio, on behalf of the Salesians of Don Bosco, Bombay.

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.

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Please address all correspondence to:

**Rev. Fr. Edwin D'Souza, sdb.,
SHRINE OF DON BOSCO'S MADONNA,
Matunga - MUMBAI - 400 019 - INDIA**

Phone/Fax: 91-22- 2414 6320, email: dbmshrine@gmail.com