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*Blessed are you,
O Virgin Mary,
by the Lord God
Most High,
above all women
on the earth;
for God has so exalted
your name,
that your praise shall be
undying on our lips.*

From the Common of the Blessed Virgin

From The Editor's Desk

LOGS AND SPECKS

Each of us grows up with unresolved issues from our childhood. More issues are added along the way. No family, no parent or spouse, can give us all the love we need. An integral part of life's journey is coming to see our own wounds and allowing God to heal those wounds. Otherwise, we carry around anger toward other humans for not being able to give us what we need.

We are all created with a need to be loved. Only God can fully meet that need. As we mature in healthy ways, as we let God into our hearts more completely, our resentment toward humanity softens. We also come to see God as the healing force which can make us whole. If we don't recognize our issues, life is always a grim battle with a succession of disappointing encounters.

In Matthew, Jesus deals with logs and specks: "Why do you see the speck that is in your neighbour's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye?" "First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbour's eye." My own issues are the ones that merit my attention.

Jesus says it clearly: when there's something wrong between me and my neighbour, I am the one with the biggest issue (log), not my neighbour (speck).

If both of us are mired in conflict, only able to see wrongs committed by the other, there simply is no resolution. If just one of us will recognize and tend to our own issues, then the other usually comes around. If both of us can focus on our own issues and allow the other to do that in their life, then resolution comes more quickly. The conflict is transformed into a life-giving event. But as long as we are assuming the other person has a bigger problem than we do, we are endlessly paralyzed.

Facing our unresolved issues is pretty painful. The work can be discouraging. Admitting the truth about what we have not received and how we have allowed that to become an excuse for our behaviours and attitudes isn't easy. As I admit my own issues, which are always based on a sense of unrealized love, I can let go of the resentment that has built up in my life. I can turn to the one God who can fulfill my needs. I can then receive the love I so desperately need. The log in my eye dissolves and the created order looks a lot different.

The issues we have in life, though difficult and painful, are our paths to wholeness and salvation. By embracing them, we come to a place of resolution and to a place of gratitude. The logs we have tried to deny become the things which point us to the loving God whose nature is to heal. Get out of your own way and get out of the way of others. Let them deal with their issues. Then you're surely on the path to salvation.

Fr. Ian Doulton sdb

LOVE 'BEARS ALL THINGS'

That verb "to bear" seems very far from being sentimental or emotional, terms which are so dear to our culture. It stands as an expression of a mature, brave and tenacious ability...

Commenting on the hymn to love of St. Paul (1 Cor. 13, 7), the Pope writes that, "love bears every trial with a positive attitude. It stands firm in hostile surroundings" (AL 118). But it would not be love if bearing was characterised by being burdensome, because at some point anger would burst out becoming an indictment of one's partner. Endurance is a characteristic of love when there is "a constant readiness to confront any challenge."

We have reached the last assertion of St. Paul which closes the list of the qualities of love, and after commenting on love that believes, hopes, and forgives all things we have come to this strange affirmation that helps make conjugal love even more real.

In the beginning all love stories are an oasis of happiness

and harmony. Only the goodness of the other is seen, the less beautiful remains in the shadows because the brilliance of goodness and beauty blinds judgment a little. Everything in the other seems lovable and those difficulties are considered small and easy to overcome. Falling in love is precisely a little blind because there is an unconscious mechanism that tends to idealize the other. The beloved is not who / he is but who I want to see; and who I want to see is my dream of the long-pampered man or woman I have in mind. Here love truly believes all things, all is excused. All is hoped for and borne even if there seems to be almost nothing to bear.

Time offers a bit of concreteness, showing the other up more and more for who he is and showing myself up for who I am. Love is substance more than appearance, history more than the presence, truth rather



than illusion, reality rather than fantasy and gift rather than demands and needs; conflict and reconciliation rather than passive acceptance of everything.

Love is not blind but cultivates a lucid gaze. If, in the beginning the story of our love seemed to be an oasis of happiness and harmony, it has certainly not become a Gethsemane today, but a real garden where only the grass grows spontaneously while pretty flowers must be planted and cared for. But while oases of happiness are for the movies, a garden of love is a reality and reality is not *fiction*: it is tough, but magnificent because it is the fruit of our daily effort.

I would put the "endurance" St. Paul speaks of here among the characteristics of love. We can talk about endurance because we are different, because we are male and female with different sensibilities and ways of seeing reality, because all of us have our limitations, beginning from the natural ones to those that are psychological and others related to our past, because we each have our good and bad days, days when we are grumpy and unapproachable. We inevitably bring home things beautiful but also ugly things from outside and so conflict is part and parcel of every couple's and real family's life.

To bear means "to carry a weight," small or sometimes great struggles which may be limited if not eliminated at least while we're on this earth. Pope Francis suggests a Christian way of bearing, which renders this

verb a real characteristic of love. It's a matter of "being steady," of "bringing to it a positive attitude," of cultivating a "pressure that is dynamic and constant." The goal is not eternal endurance but one that passes with time. How beautiful it is when the couple can say to each other: "Thank you, because you and I stay close to each other even when I'm unbearable; I know myself and I know that sometimes I am."

When speaking about endurance Pope Francis quotes two examples: Martin Luther King (1929-1968) and some separated spouses. The former knew how to look for the good even in those who hated him. If we can see this good, recognize the image of God even in the enemy, we can defeat the enemy; "Hate for hate only intensifies the existence of hate and evil in the universe [...] the strong person is the person who can cut off the chain of hate." On the other hand there are people who have had to stay separate from their spouses because of unbearable violence and abuse and yet they have managed to have compassion, to pray and even to forgive.

Endurance is not a stand that is generic, firm and resistant, but can become a creative and generative love. Love always generates something in me and in the other. And so that verb 'to bear,' which seems so far from sentimental and emotional love, so dear to our culture, stands as an expression of a mature, genuine, courageous, tenacious and strong love against evil. □

THE FAMILY CLOCK'S HANDS...SOLID

by Maria Chiara Gregolin

No marriage is perfect, let's accept that. There are times and sometimes they are longer periods perhaps, when you've got to draw on every resource to overcome issues. There may also be certain things that the other does or certain attitudes (which become habits!)...and then...oh gosh!

There are no plates or knives and cutlery that fly in our homes, but there are silences and scowls but more than that, there are words that are sharper than any ceramics or blades.

In the car this morning my husband and I wondered if we were to meet each other for the first time today, would we still fall in love. Fortunately (or by grace) for both of us the answer was "Yes, of course!" But only if we met in our "good" moments!

Andrew, my husband argued that if he met me today in my darkest moments, he wouldn't feel very attracted to the idea of even getting to know me better and, to be honest, I would feel the same way if I met him when he was angry or stressed.

We wouldn't have had the strength to hold one another up if we were like that at the beginning of our relationship. Indeed, while falling in love, lovers don't express themselves immediately and completely, nor are they will-

ing to see the flaws and limitations in each other.

But in the course of time they remain together and each of them have a way of truly being themselves. They "survive" the engagement and reach marriage and with it the wonderful reality that turns into a family.

"The family" (it seems begins with Don Vito Corleone in the film *The Godfather*) is the reality where everything goes wrong. It is that time of life in which one is constantly late, one forgets important things, fights about the silliest things but it is a place where one laughs heartily without good reason and you can hug yourself out of sheer joy. You feel deeply happy and no longer alone.

If you can't have a bad day with your family then where can you have one? If you can't cry and complain in the family, if you are not free to fight and then make peace, if you can't find a warm but chaotic nest when you are a child or a firm but disorganized pad during adolescence, then where?

Family time is a time for patience and selflessness. For us it's the time to restart: we have just to think of the many pitfalls, scraps, misunderstandings; and also how many times we've experienced the joy of starting



are found.

It is in this spirit that we read St. Paul's exhortation on Charity that bears all things: because beyond the limits of our love, God continues to fill our hearts with his grace, to broaden, renew and enliven our horizons.

So, my dear, today I know that there is a "past" for the two of us and I would re-marry you to experience what we will have in "the future." □

again from where we left off and discovering the other as a new person.

And this is also the time for our children to be able to experience the power of relationships: because in a world where you're worth as much as "you are," where the self is constantly quantified - weighed, heart rate, likes, followers - but even where everything is disconnected, delinked, fluid, family time is where transcendence, emotion and narration

THE LAW OF THE GARBAGE TRUCK

One day I hopped in a taxi and we took off for the airport. We were driving in the right lane when suddenly a black car jumped out of a parking space right in front of us. My taxi driver slammed on his brakes, skidded, and missed the other car by just inches! The driver of the other car whipped his head around and started yelling at us!

My taxi driver just smiled and waved at the guy. And I mean, really friendly. So I asked, "Why did you just do that? This guy almost ruined your car and sent us to the hospital!" This is when my taxi driver taught me what I now call, "The Law of the Garbage Truck."

He explained that many people are like garbage trucks. They run around full of garbage (frustration, anger, and disappointment, etc.). As their garbage piles up, they need a place to dump it and sometimes they'll dump it on you.

Don't take it personally. Just smile, wave, wish them well, and move on. Don't take their garbage and spread it to other people at work, at home, or on the streets.

The bottom line is that successful people do not let garbage trucks take over their day. Life's too short to wake up in the morning with regrets, so ...love the people who treat you right and pray for the ones who don't. Life is ten percent what you make it and ninety percent how you take it!

Have a blessed, garbage-free day. □



St. Martin Magazine, Ireland

DEATH IS NOT JUST A FLASH OF FEAR

Enzo Risatti

And what if the fear of the end of life were largely the result of a clever lie?

Of all the months, November is for many the most gray and melancholic of the year. It will return every year at this time, a time when the days are shorter and the fog and the cold become more oppressive. Or again, it is so perhaps because of the occasion of November 2, when cemeteries get filled with people visiting their deceased loved ones and remembering that man, born from the earth, is destined to return to the earth...

A reality that concerns every person

Of all the millions of subjects we discuss and ponder over, only death has this special feature which makes it unique to it. It concerns and involves everyone because it is the only certain eventuality that happens to everyone, since the only certainty is the certainty of having to die.

Although it has never been ranked as among the most cheerful of topics, since man has gradually estranged himself from nature and the simplicity of peasant life to approach the cold,

aseptic and highly organized life of the city, death has taken on the form of a frightening monster. It is not frightening for those who are "sensible," who for example, do not drive around recklessly. They don't break highway codes; don't risk harming themselves and others. They are those who say 'no' to smoking and excessive alcohol in order to take care of their health. But it is frightening for the "sick," who live a paralyzed existence which prevents them from growing and flourishing.

It is a fear, as Paul of Tarsus wrote in a letter to the Christians of Philippi in which he says: *"For me to live is Christ and to die is gain...In fact I am in a dilemma; on the one hand is my desire to be freed from this body to be with Christ, which would be much better; on the other hand, it is more necessary for you that I remain in the flesh"* (Phil 1, 21-24).

Such is the clarity of St. Paul's words that one cannot fail to pause at least for a moment and suspect that perhaps the fear of death could be the fruit of a great

lie and that, seen through the eyes of faith, death may even reveal itself as a desirable and/or desired reality. Of course, we are referring to death itself, not the physical suffering that sometimes accompanies it and which is neither beautiful nor pleasant.

Unmasking the greatest lie

Every lie – as we know – always conceals at least one liar. One need not possess the acumen of a Columbus or have watched all the episodes of Agatha Christie's: *"Murder She Wrote"* to guess who's behind the increasingly widespread fear of death. It is the "Prince" of lies. It was he who, at the beginning, deceived Adam and Eve into choosing between good and evil and thus catapulting humanity into the realm of suffering and death.

The motive is clear: since the moment of death represents man's return to the House of the Father, the birth of real life and the beginning of the good and the beautiful for all eternity and believing that obviously means the

end of everything the beginning of the catastrophe of the origin of evil. To delude man by telling him that with death all is lost is the ultimate insult to all humankind. The only remedy to check this shabby plot is to entrust oneself unreservedly to the Father and to believe what Jesus revealed to us about himself and the destiny that awaits us. It is a destiny that Saint Paul, in his first letter addressed to the Christians of the community of Corinth summarizes thus: *"We are buried mortals, we rise again, immortal. We are buried miserable, we rise again, glorious. We are buried weak and we rise, full of strength. The material body is buried but what is raised is a body animated by the Spirit"* (1 Cor. 15, 42-44).

Because the Prince of Lies knew that the worst thing (according to him) that could possibly happen to man at the moment of death would be to meet the God who created him and, who beyond everything and everyone else, loves him with a love without limits. □



**SALESIAN
SAINTS**

**ARTIMIDE
ZATTI
(1880 - 1951)**

*Salesian Lay Brother,
Blessed*

Artimide Zatti was born in Boretto (Reggio Emilia) on October 12, 1880. Already at the tender age of nine he began to experience the hardship of sacrifice as he began earning wages as a day-labourer. Forced by poverty, the Zatti family migrated to Argentina at the beginning of 1897 and settled in Bahía Blanca. The young Artimide began attending the parish school run by the Salesians where he met Father Carlo Cavalli a pious and extraordinarily kind man whom he took as his spiritual director. It was Father Cavalli who directed him to the Salesian way of life and so at the age of 20 he entered the Aspirantate at Bernal.

While assisting a young priest suffering from tuberculosis, he contracted the disease. Father Cavalli's paternal concern - which was following him from afar - made it possible for him to move to the Salesian house at Viedma where the climate was more suitable and more especially because there at the missionary hospital he would meet a good Salesian infirmarian who practically served as a "doctor," Father Evasio Garrone. He invited Artimide to pray to Mary Help of Christians for a cure, suggesting that he make a promise: "If you heal me, I will dedi-



cate my entire life to serving these sick people." Artimide made that promise and he mysteriously recovered. He would then say: "I believed, I promised, I recovered." He saw his path clearly marked out for him and he took it up enthusiastically. He accepted with humility and docility the small suffering of having to renounce the priesthood, making his first profession as a Salesian Lay Brother on January 11, 1908 and his perpetual profession on February 18, 1911. Faithful to the promise he made to the Madonna he dedicated himself immediately and totally to the hospital, initially looking after the pharmacy. But when Father Garrone died in 1913 the responsibility of the entire hospital fell on his shoulders: in fact, he became the assistant director, administrator and an expert nurse who was esteemed by all

the patients and the doctors too gave him much more freedom to act. It came to be accepted that his main remedy was himself: his attitude, his jokes, joy and affection. He not only wanted to administer medicine but also to help his patients see their situation as a sign of God's will, especially when death was near. He was not only a nurse but also an educator in the faith to every person in their moments of trial and illness; a "good Samaritan" in the style of Don Bosco, "a sign and bearer of God's love."

His service was not limited to the hospital but it extended to the whole city, indeed to the two cities on the banks of the river Negro: Viedma and Patagones. Whenever he was needed, day or night, in whatever kind of weather, he reached even the slums in the suburbs offering his services for free. While he rode his trusty bicycle he prayed and occupied himself with reading ascetical works. He rested in the remaining few hours. Even when he went to bed he remained constantly on call, always available. The fame of this holy infirmarian spread throughout the South and the sick travelled to see him from all over Patagonia. It was not uncommon for the patients to prefer to see the saintly infirmarian than the doctors.

Artimide Zatti loved his patients in a truly moving way. He saw in them Jesus himself so much so that when he asked the sisters for some clothes for a newly arrived boy, he said: "Sister do you have some clothes for a twelve-year-old Jesus?" He expressed his attention towards them with such sensitive nu-

ances. There are those who remember seeing him carrying away on his shoulders the body of an inmate who had died during the night so as to hide it from the view of the other sick patients and he did so while reciting Psalm 130 (Out of the depths...). Faithful to the Salesian spirit and to the motto he inherited from Don Bosco to his sons - "work and temperance" - he worked prodigiously with habitual promptness, with a heroic spirit of sacrifice and an absolute detachment from every personal satisfaction. He took no holidays or rest. Some said that the only five days of rest he had were those he spent - in prison! Yes, he also knew what it was to be in prison because the police attributed the escape of a hospitalized prisoner to him but he was acquitted and returned him in triumph.

He was someone easy to relate with, very sympathetic and happy in the company of simple and humble people. But above all, he was a man of God who radiated the light of his presence. A rather skeptical doctor from the hospital would say: "When I saw Brother Zatti my skepticism faltered." And another said: "Since I saw Brother Zatti I began to believe in God."

In 1950 the indefatigable infirmarian fell from a ladder and it was then that symptoms of cancer were detected which he serenely accepted. However, he continued to attend to his duties for another year until after accepting heroically his suffering he died, on March 15, 1951, fully conscious and surrounded by the affection and gratitude of an entire population. □

Witnesses in & for Our Times



ST. ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY (1207-1231) (NOVEMBER 17)

We are in a courtroom. A courtier arrives walking very slowly and solemnly. The president reads the sentence rather distractedly, in a very detached manner in slightly bureaucratic tone of voice: "We condemn the accused present to one year in prison, to be served in the prison of St Victor for having stolen from the church of St. Augustine." Suddenly a voice is heard: "Just a moment, there's a mistake. It was not from the church of St. Augustine but from the church of St. Francis that I stole." The president replied: "It's the same, one saint is as good as another." The accused added: "But if one saint is as good as another, then why send me to St. Victor, why not to San Remo?" Obviously, that's a joke!

But is it really true that the sanctity of one saint is synonymous with that of another?

Is it true that if you know a saint you know them all?

I really don't think so. God doesn't mass-produce; God is Infinite Creativity.

And just as "every star differs



from every other," so it is in the firmament of saints in the Church.

But if it is true that there are as

many kinds of sanctity as there are saints, it is also equally important to remember that the source of all their inspiration is only the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This also applies to Elizabeth of Hungary. She lived the Gospel of Christ in her state as a princess, a bride, the mother and then a young widow.

Elizabeth was born in Hungary in 1207 to King Andrew II and Gertrude. He died in Germany at the age of 24 in 1231. Four years later he was declared a saint by Gregory IX. As was obvious due to the bureaucracy of the time the processes were more rapid but no less efficient and rigorous.

As a very young bride she was promised in marriage to a young German prince who was educated in Eisenach and Wartburg in Thuringia (that was why some German authors would speak of her as Elizabeth of Thuringia).

In 1221 she married Louis IV (or Ludovik). Scholars say it was a happy marriage gladdened by the birth of three children, Herman, Sophie and Gertrude. Even though she lived at court, Princess Elizabeth never felt attracted by the luxury and splendour around her. "Elizabeth was enamoured by a particular interest in the new religious ideals preached by two recently founded mendicant orders (the Franciscans and Dominicans). Her life was marked by charity and renunciation which was in stark contrast to the lavish atmosphere of the Wartburg court... It appears that Louis IV approved his wife's new lifestyle since he himself decided to participate in the sixth crusade." (G. Klaniczay).

A very young widow

In fact, Elizabeth's husband took up the cross (of the Crusade) in June 1224 but before leaving for the crusade he entrusted his wife's spiritual wellbeing to the care of a famous preacher and an important person at that time: Conrad of Marburg (who would later become her principal biographer and the advocate of her canonization). Three years later in 1227 Louis IV left with Frederick II but his crusading adventure was brief. He died at Otranto because of an epidemic leaving behind his young wife and three children in Germany. Elizabeth did not lose heart but as her spiritual Father Conrad wrote, "ad sumum tendens perfectionem" (tended to the highest perfection). She continued to pursue her ideal of living a life of poverty and renunciation, dedicating herself completely to caring for her children and helping the poor. Elizabeth refused to cave in to the pressure of her parents and relatives to abandon her life of voluntary poverty and return to Hungary to the comfort and assistance of the court. In fact she generously offered her own dowry for the construction of a hospital named after St. Francis.

Her biographer Conrad of Marburg extensively described Elizabeth's commitment to charity towards the poor and the sick. He called her "Pauperum consolatrix" (Comforter of the poor).

Not content with helping the poor and beggars, she became a beggar herself and experienced their condition of poverty and humiliation all for the sake of the

poor Christ. Then of her own will, one Good Friday she renounced all her wealth and all the comforts of this world to follow her Master even in this.

Interestingly, this spirituality, consisting of a great and preeminent love of poverty and the renunciation of all comforts, was what she took on herself despite the advice of her confessor and spiritual father Conrad (who belonged to the Norbertine Order).

The first and decisive influence on her spiritual journey came from the Franciscans. In fact, her first confessor belonged to the recently founded Franciscan order. The sanctity of Francis, his spirituality and charisma lived out through his sons crossed the Alps and bore the fruits of sanctity which were seen in Elizabeth of Hungary.

"Conferences of St. Elizabeth"

Elizabeth died when she was just 24 years old on November 17 in 1231 but her fame and her cult spread rapidly because of the numerous miracles attributed to her intercession. Her tomb became a place of pilgrimage and healings. Conrad of Marburg propagated her fame exalting her as the princess who lived in poverty and charity and a model of a new spirituality that could be emulated by other members of the nobility.

Her process of canonization promoted by Conrad went ahead quickly. Miracles attributed to her were not lacking. There were many who bore sworn testimony to Elizabeth's sanctity. According to scholars her writings are perhaps some of the richest in medieval Europe and they are a study

on Elizabeth's personality, spirituality and sanctity. She was enrolled among the saints in Perugia by Pope Gregory IX on the occasion of the feast of Pentecost in the year 1235.

Devotion to this new saint spread rapidly and her tomb continued to be a place of pilgrimage. Many of the then religious congregations of women especially the Tertiaries of St. Francis were also inspired by Elizabeth of Hungary. Although, some scholars attest that St. Elizabeth, despite having great devotion to St. Francis did not join any of the religious families that followed the charisma of the saint of Assisi.

In the following century, in various cities in Germany such as Trier, Augsburg and Munich, there rose so-called "Conferences of St. Elizabeth" which soon spread to many other cities in Europe. And here is a significant detail: Women who consecrated themselves to the care of the sick were called: "Elizabethinerinnen" that is 'Elizabethan.'

Another significant detail that should not be forgotten during these years as the European Union is being consolidated: St. Boniface was declared the official "Apostle of Germany" because he was the principal evangelizer of its people. But he came from Southern England. St. Elizabeth, a Hungarian by birth was not only called "the saint of Charity" but also "Gloria Teutoniae." It is as if there are not just leaders, artists and scholars who go to make a nation great, there are also holy men and women like the Hungarian princess Elizabeth also called "the Glory of Germany." □

IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Literary Economics

A journalist was told never to use two words where one would do, and he carried out this advice in his report of a fatal accident in the following manner:

"John Jones struck a match to see if there was any gasoline in his tank. There was. Age 65."

Light Matter

Astronomy isn't an easy subject to teach as the teacher was finding, but he was keen on it.

"Just fancy, boys," he exclaimed presently, "the light that comes to us from the sun travels thousands of miles per second! Isn't that wonderful?"

"Not very," said one bored lad.

"It's downhill all the way!"

Infamous Safety

"Madam," said the salesman, "this fire extinguisher will last you fifty years."

"But, I'll be gone before then."

"Well, in that case, you can take it with you!"

Fatal Certification

The doctor's small son was entertaining a friend in his father's surgery, and they were looking with awed admiration at the articulated skeleton in the cupboard.

"Where did he get it?" asked the guest in a whisper.

"Oh, he's had it for a long time. I guess, maybe, that's his first patient."

Parental Parenthesis

The parson was having a serious chat with one of his parishioners.

"Yes," he said, "education is a very important thing. We parents must sacrifice our pleasures for our children's benefit. Do you know, I had to pinch like fury to send my boys to the university?" Looking startled the parishioner answered, "Oh, but my husband is too afraid of the law to do anything like that!"

Hospitality Industry

The hotel manager walked up to the new guest and said: "Your room is now ready, but because of shortage of help you will have to make your own bed."

"Oh, that's nothing, I don't mind making my own bed," replied the guest.

"That's fine," said the manager, "Here's a hammer and a saw!"

Industrious Supervision

He was certainly no model of industry. Suddenly, digging his classmate in the ribs he remarked: "See that fellow in the class - in the third desk, Maurice? I've been watching that loafer for the past two hours and he hasn't done a single stroke of work."

Phonetically Speaking

It was a reading lesson in Johnny's class, and it was his turn to read. He went on all right until he stumbled at the word "barque."

"Barque," prompted the teacher. Johnny looked astonished, but remained silent.

"Barque," again prompted the teacher more emphatically.

This time Johnny replied with:

"Bow-wow-wow." □



WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

by Ian Pinto, sdb

LIVING WITH UNCERTAINTY

Our lives are full of uncertainty. No one knew where they would be born, to which parents, in what kind of family, friends, the social situation, the economic status, the possible infections, physical or mental handicaps, current state of life, successes or failures, the list is endless. All of these things mentioned above are all uncertain until they happen. No one knows whether their business will succeed or fail, or whether they might meet with an accident and tragically lose their life. Uncertainty is all around us. We cannot escape it. It is deeply embedded in our human nature. In fact, it is embedded into the very fabric of nature. Only God is absolutely certain about everything. That's why we call Him, omniscient. He is the only one who is never surprised because He knows everything even before it happens.

While for God there is no uncertainty, there is plenty for us. The only thing perhaps that we can be certain about is that one

day our life will end! The Psalms tells us: *“Our days are gone in no time. Seventy years to our life or eighty is we are strong”* (Ps 90: 9-10). Whether we like it or not, all our lives are going to come to an end one day. There is no doubt about that; but how, when and where it will happen, remains uncertain. We could spend our time brooding over impending death and make our lives a long anxious numbering of days or instead of worrying about it, we could make concerted efforts to live each moment well. There are so many people in the world who are so preoccupied with trying to delay death that they have forgotten to live their lives. This is an absolute tragedy. Life is not meant to be wasted away by worry and unnecessary anxiety.

Jesus issues a strong recommendation in this regard: *“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. [...] And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to*

your span of life? ... Do not worry ... your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things” (Mt 6:25-32).

DYING WITH CERTAINTY

There is no escape from death. From the mightiest to the meekest, death remains a common experience. I recall the story of the ancient Greek philosopher, Diogenes. One day, Alexander the Great, the mighty conqueror, found the philosopher staring intently at piles of human bones. When asked what he was looking for, he explained, *“I'm looking for the bones of your father but cannot distinguish them from those of a slave.”* This is a hard fact.

It doesn't really matter how much wealth you've amassed in life or how little, how many possessions you have or how little, how happy you were or sad, how successful you were or not, how pretty or handsome you looked or not, death reduces all of that to the same result. In death, all are equal. There is however, one crucial thing that makes a difference in death and that is the good that one does in life. Death cannot erase the good or similarly the evil we have done in our lives. While the sinner and the saint are reduced to the same fate, their lives are not. The sinner's life ceases to be an abomination and a negative influence on others whereas the saint's life continues to live on in the hearts and minds of all the people he/she has touched.

For this reason, we would all do well to keep in mind that death is certain but how we die, is not. The same goes for life; life is uncertain, but how we live it, is not. It is up to us how we want to live and

how we die. We could live with positivity, faith and service of others or we could live with anxiety, selfishness and doubt. How we live, is how we'll die. Our death will depend on our life. Mind you, I'm not talking about the kind of death or anything of that sort; that is all beyond human knowledge. I'm referring to the legacy of our lives. We could choose a life that ends with death or one that lives on even after.

RISING WITH CERTAINTY

Our faith teaches us that all will rise on the last day (Jn 11:24). Whether you have lived a good or bad life, you will be resurrected. The catch however, lies in the nature of the resurrection. For the virtuous, resurrection will be into the presence of the Lord, in heavenly glory with the angels and saints but for the unrighteous, it will be in hell, *“where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”* (Mt 13:42). The Church teaches us about the last four things which are absolutely certain in each of our lives. They are: Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell.

We are well aware by now that death is certain but very often we forget that life doesn't end with death. Death sends us to eternal judgment where the Lord will judge us on the quality of our life and offer us either heaven or hell. Advent is the season for taking stock of our lives and preparing for the coming of the Lord, which is another way of saying, Judgment Day. How are we living? What are we doing to merit heaven? Let's not waste another moment: *“The day of the Lord is near”* (Is 13:6) □

Quiet Spaces

LUKEWARM THINKING

On the morning of November 16, 2016, the Holy Father celebrated Mass at Casa Santa Marthae. The following is the edited English text of the Pope's homily which was delivered in Italian.

The confrontation with a “powerful” Lord, who scolds harshly, though always out of love, was the focus of Pope Francis’ homily at the Mass he celebrated at Santa Marta on Tuesday morning, 15 November. The liturgy proposed the image of Jesus “who stands before us,” and does so in order to reprove us, because he loves us; either to invite us or to be invited.”

The reproach can be found in the book of Revelation (3:1-6,14-22) and in how the Lord addresses the Christians of the Church of Laodicea. The Pontiff explained that it consists of the “example of a Church”, but that it is found “everywhere.” It can indeed be applied to all “those Christians who are neither cold nor hot: they are lukewarm. They are always as quiet waters.” The Lord rebukes them and they ask: “Why do you rebuke me, Lord? I am not bad.”

“Perhaps,” the Pope said, “I was bad! But this is worse. You are dead.” In fact, the Lord uses powerful words: “Why are you as quiet water, which do not move, because you are lukewarm, I will spit you out of my mouth.” It is the situation you encounter, Francis noted, when “warmth enters the Church, into a community, into a Christian home,” and you hear people say: “No, no, all is calm, everything is alright here, we are believers, we do things well,” that is to say, when everything is “starched” and lacking “consistency” and “with the first rain it dissolves.” However, the Pope asked, “what does a lukewarm person think” that merits him such harshness? We read in the Scripture passage: “think of being rich.” In fact it is certain: “I am rich and I do not need anything, I am calm.” He is a victim, therefore, of “the tranquillity that deceives.” However, the Pontiff warned, “when the soul of a Church, a family, a community or a person, is always calm, God is not there. Let us be careful not to walk in this manner in the Christian life.” In fact, the Pope added, paraphrasing the passage from the Book of Revelation: “You say: ‘I am rich,’” but “you do not know what it means to be wretched? Nor miserable, poor, blind and naked?” There are three “great slaps,” the Pope commented, “to awaken the tepid soul, asleep in the warmth.” And to those who complain: “But I do not hurt anyone, I am calm,” they should remember: “Neither do you do good!”

The Lord’s answer is tough, “it seems like an insult,” but he “does so out of love.” In fact, shortly after we read: “All those whom I love, I rebuke them and teach them.” He also adds a suggestion: that of “purchasing, from me, gold refined by fire in order to become rich.” Namely: to discover another richness, “one that I can give you. Not that wealth of the soul that you believe you have because you are good, because

you do things well, everything in a calm manner;” but precisely “another wealth, that which comes from God, which always brings a cross, always brings storm, always brings some unrest in the soul.

The next counsel is that of “buying white clothes, to dress yourself, so that you do not appear in your shameful nakedness.” Other people who are lukewarm, the Pope explained, “do not realize that they are naked, like the tale of the naked king in which the child says: ‘The king is naked!’” Even the Lord suggests buying eye drops in order to “anooint your eyes, recall the view and you can see.” those who are lukewarm,” Francis pointed out, “indeed lose the capacity for contemplation, the ability to see the great and beautiful things of God.”

Therefore the Lord stands before those who are lukewarm and says: “Wake up, correct yourselves!” He does this “to help us convert.” However, the Pope continued, God is also present “in another way: he goes to invite us.” We read again in Revelation: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come to him, I will eat with him and he with me.” The Pope explained that “the ability to hear when the Lord knocks at our door” is very important, “because he wants to give us something good, he wants to come to us.” Unfortunately there are Christians “who are not aware when the Lord is knocking. Every noise is the same for them.” They do not realize that the Lord is knocking and saying: “It is I, have no fear. I want to enter, to be with you, to have dinner with you; in other words, to celebrate, and to console you. Not with the consolation of warmth, that which is not needed; but with the consolation of fruitfulness, that which helps you to move forward, to give life to others.”

Finally, the Lord also wants to “be invited”. As we read in the scene with Zacchaeus from Luke’s Gospel (19:1-10): the tax collector from Jericho “feels that curiosity, a curiosity that comes from grace,” which “was sown by the Holy Spirit” and brings Zacchaeus to say: “I want to see the Lord.” The initiative “comes from the Spirit,” the Holy Father said. Hence the Lord “looks up and says: ‘Come down, invite me to your house!’”

God, therefore, “always acts with love: either to correct us, to invite us to dinner, or to be invited.” He is going to tell us: ‘Wake up.’ He is going to tell us: ‘Open.’ He is going to tell us: ‘Come down.’ But it is always him.” Hence the final invitation, that every Christian asks himself: “Do I know in my heart how to distinguish when the Lord says ‘wake up’? When he says ‘open’? And when he says me “come down?” □

THE MYSTERY OF LOVE

Pierluigi Menato (TA/ID)

He slammed the door shut behind him; the thud made the windows vibrate waking up the little child sleeping in the bassinet. The child's mother quietly got up and tried to put the whimpering child back to sleep but in vain. It went on crying, so she picked him up and rocked him till he calmed down. Even in the dark his bright eyes glistened through his tear-stained little face. As she looked closely at him a smile broke upon his little lips, a smile of trust and joy.

Elise just couldn't contain the convulsive rush of tenderness that welled up in her heart. She clutched that innocent little body as tight as she could; hoping she could rid herself of the anguish that her husband's behavior was causing.

She remembered how he reacted to the announcement that she was to be a mother. He made her even feel guilty. As if it was somehow her fault. The injustice of it all kindled a kind of rebellion within her and it seemed to hurt. She felt so alone, struggling against the insurmountably high wall that he had thrown up between them after the birth of little Andy.

With all her youthful energy, and her faith in the power of love, she tried to break down the kind of barrier that she felt weighed down on her every day without knowing its origins. While she sensed his disappointment she ignored its source.

And yet she was sure that he loved the child. She remembered how happy he was the year be-

fore the child was born; and he seemed delirious with joy even as he endured those first sleepless months which are common with all little babies. The little child often surprised him as he bent over ecstatically to study his features and in those moments she was sure that he was so happy, happier than anyone on earth.

But for some time now things had changed in him; he started coming home later than usual; he was irritable and withdrawn. He could never speak kindly to her but with the child he was always gentle but now he had even stopped smiling.

The few words he spoke to her sounded increasingly like accusations; bland food, a crease on his pants or dust stains on his shirt. Sometimes his observations became harsher if he noticed she was holding back tears and he shook her violently, banging his fist on the table regard-



less whether it frightened the child or not.

She always remained silent; a little because she loved him and sensed that he was in some kind of pain which he was unable to speak about. She waited patiently hoping that he would feel the need to open up and share his problems, partly because she was mild by nature and because her upbringing had taught her to remain silent, to hide her tears and to smile easily, like a glimmer of sunshine dispelling the dark clouds of a moment earlier.

She had been raised by a stepmother who had a heart of gold but with a strong character. She knew how to impose herself with just a look or a word. Her father was a very outgoing person who spent very little time at home. He represented a famous company in the market because of which he was often away for long periods of time.

Because his absences lasted long he wanted his daughter to have a second mother who, if not a substitute for his real affection at least to meet the thousand cares that Elise at her age needed. When Jim entered her life and filled her dreams with sweetness, she decided that she wanted to remain with him forever, to be his sweet, tender and understanding wife. She loved him so much!

Her wedding day was the most beautiful day of her life: the day she was to belong to the man God had sent to her and whom she loved as she never thought she could and perhaps much more that she had loved her own father. She thought she was so happy. It made her anxious

which is common for anyone who had tasted just a little piece of heaven. She had anxiously asked herself: 'Will this last? Will it always be like this? Why am I so happy?' It seemed to sound like an act of distrust. It was as if she doubted God... Thereafter she settled into a kind of gentle joy.

Little Andy's birth had helped to seal their union that was so promising from the beginning. But now...what was happening?

She scrutinized herself very severely trying to see if there was some fault on her part. Did she lack concern for him? She had to admit that Jim was the same as he was on the day they first met; she loved him intensely without even the slightest flaw. But did he love her anymore...? Did all the harshness come from the coldness she might have felt towards him? She had read, she didn't remember where, that sometimes without any reason love could end like this...with an irremediable rupture...

This thought brought her unbearable anguish. She wanted to drive it away like a temptation but despite herself it came back to haunt her like a nightmare which left her sleepless for several nights, sad and thoughtful.

When she was certain that she was pregnant, she thought this would bring peace once more to their home. Instead the news was greeted with anger, a kind of resentment for her. She thought her announcement would be seen as a triumph. In her bewilderment, she sought refuge and comfort in little Andy who seemed to sense her pain and so he became even sweeter, much

dearer, wanting to say things in his own way, trying to express his own sentiments, sentiments that his mother would want to hear.

In the evening when Jim came home, darker and more withdrawn than when he had left in the morning, Elise was in no doubt about what she had suspected. For the first time, in the face of the pain that found to be stronger than herself she wished to die, but then she repented at the thought because it meant she was a coward; renouncing the cross that God had assigned to everyone. So she bowed her head submissively.

The months rolled by one after another. Jim always seemed hard, lost in his world. Sometimes he caught a glimpse of this as he watched her wander through the house clumsy, burdened because of the situation, but maybe it was just his impression, a shadow that vanished as quickly as it had come. They lived together, but like two strangers. The man's face did not brighten when he looked at little Andrew everyday, the way he clung to his father; his tenacity would have made any father proud. Even with his son, he had taken a strange attitude: he caressed him, he could not help it, he had to do it, but he no longer held him close to his heart like he used to. When he was just about to do it something prevented him and because of that he put the child down with a brusque motion and go back to reading his paper or watching TV.

More often than not, he went

out and did not come back until much later when both mother and baby were asleep.

The baby was born on a winter's night. Having anticipated its arrival the father had to help assist in bringing the new creature into the world. Although everything was painful and at times the wait became uncertain there was still a mysterious poetry which makes every cynic ponder, makes every father feel humble; he even admires the woman who appears transfigured by the pain and also by something incomprehensible that sublimates it.

In the hospital Jim was tender with Elise, he whispered words of comfort, holding her hands for a long time to give her strength and once more the woman deluded herself. She was grateful for the pain that made her a martyr for him and she could not restrain a convulsive cry when he held his child in her arms wrapped in a pink shawl.

"Are you happy, Elise? The baby you wanted so much!"

"And you Jim?"

"Me too, Elise, We have two beautiful children."

The baby was a strange little creature; she almost never cried and when she did she seemed to ask forgiveness for having disturbed him, her wail was so subdued. But when she was three months just when she was beginning to smile at her mother and giving the first signs of recognizing, one night, very quietly, it happened, she went back to be among the angels.

During those months, a little because her health was a bit shaken and a little because of all

the house work Elise didn't have much time to think about Jim. She did not pay much attention to his gloomy attitude. But when she discovered that his love and attachment for the child was intense; she didn't want anything else. He didn't care much about her. At times it seemed like he didn't even see her; even his words and his attitudes were such that he always seemed angry.

She endured everything and silently wondered what had disturbed Jim's soul; but so long as he loved the child nothing was lost. She spread herself thin trying to get the house running as he would like it but when death subtly slipped in kidnapping her little angel, everything collapsed around her.

She felt so lost and alone without any support. The strength that pushed and encouraged her was gone, it was all over. All she wanted to do was to lie down by the grave of her little child and listen to nothing more; to forget the fact that this life was a struggle all the time, nonstop.

Whenever Jim came home he often found her bent over the empty cradle, her face frozen by a pain that rendered her tearless and cold. Even little Andy couldn't make her forget the little child she could no longer hold to her heart, whose closed eyes would never look at her again. Sometimes when he shouted out gleefully because something amused or bothered him she wanted to shut him up.

Then she almost felt ashamed at that feeling; it seemed like some unexpressed resentment towards Andy; the pain had changed her.

Perhaps if Jim were a bit more understanding; if he took her by the hand he would have helped her through her suffering by speaking to her from his brotherly heart he could probably bring her back to the surface from the abyss that was swallowing her up, then everything would be different. But Jim seemed unaware of his surroundings.

In his own way he was also suffering much because of the death of his daughter, but he couldn't understand her despair.

Comfort came to him from other sources. His wife's attitude seemed absurd and inconceivable. He had coldly thought of a solution which at that moment seemed like a duty towards Andy; separation. What could he do with a woman who only lived for the memory of her dead child? He needed to rebuild his life by doing something concrete.

One evening he told Elise about it. The woman listened silently as she was now accustomed to do, nodding while he complained about little Andy's irritants. He was convinced that things were underway and that Elise had resigned herself to the separation that was now inevitable. But he was shocked when she asked him: "Will the woman that works with you look after little Andy?"

So, did he know what he was going to do or what she was insinuating? The question was asked in a voice that seemed indifferent to the answer. He didn't reply; he preferred to keep silent. Elise didn't say anything further but in her heart she felt that the wall that her husband

had erected for months was now crumbling with Andy among the ruins. He seemed to hear a sound in his tired brain. Jim was pushing her aside and taking away the child. That was all that mattered. Of late she had proved to be a bad mother, it was true, and she admitted as much...

With his sick mind, he raved day and night. Now God had punished her, she had forgotten that she was a creature; she allowed herself to stand up like a judge to blame God for his designs. What did she know about how good or bad she was? If her child was dead she had the right to cry but not to despair. She could no longer hold back the course of events. Jim had opened the door of his house to a woman who had seduced him and little Andy would be a stranger, an intruder, while she, far away could do nothing anymore. She had lost everything, both of them.

A plan gradually matured in her mind and while Jim was away, she packed a suitcase with a few essentials, Andy's clothes, took some money from the dresser draw that was set aside for emergencies and her few jewels. She dressed little Andy who was excited with all these preparations and couldn't stop asking questions.

If she left, she would spend the upcoming Christmas with her stepmother who, she was sure, would welcome her and show her how to proceed. But she must not let Andy see his home ruined and the place that belonged to her alone, occupied by another woman.

She consulted the timetable and saw that there was quite a bit of time to spare. Leaving her suitcase in the parlour, she took Andy by the hand and together they went to the cemetery to bid farewell for the last time to her little child. Tears she had not shed when the little child was taken from her now flowed copiously as she thought this would be her last visit. She cried long and hard, while the little child tried to comfort her with a thousand promises that he would be good.

That was how he found her in the snow: leaning against the cross with one hand around it while the other was with those of Andy who was busy covering them with kisses.

Something had happened within him. During one of those mysterious forebodings, he suddenly sensed that some misfortune was about to bring him down. He was unable to resist her and so he came home earlier than usual. The house was empty and a suitcase was in the parlour. What was about to happen suddenly dawned on him: the thought of losing his child and the woman he thought did not love him anymore shocked him; he anxiously ran to the cemetery. "Elise!"

But the woman was lost in a sea of tears that would make her feel better later but now they overwhelmed her.

He called her even louder and since she did not hear him he came up to her and drew her to his sobbing chest, their tears mingling. His were tears of repentance, remorse and hope; all this time little Andy clung tightly to their feet. □

FIORETTI OF DON BOSCO -10

by Michele Molineris

32. The Bells rang by themselves (1846)

The field where Don Bosco gathered his boys to play was withdrawn on April 5, (Palm Sunday). They would gather there for the last time. Extremely saddened but still trusting in God and in the Blessed Virgin, Don Bosco decided to test the prayers of his boys many of them were little angels. So on the morning of that Sunday, having gathered in the field and hearing their confessions for quite a while he brought them together and announced that they would go to Mass at the church of the Madonna in the meadow, a monastery about two kilometres from Turin; on a little pilgrimage.

They had all gathered and were reciting the Rosary and singing hymns when at the entrance of the avenue which led from the main road to the monastery, all the church bells began to ring. It was the first time such a thing had happened to them; they had never received such a joyful welcome. For that, Don Bosco wanted to thank Fr. Fulgenzio, the prior of the monastery and then confessor of (King) Charles Albert. But the prior protested that neither he nor anyone else in the convent had given the order for bells to be rung to announce their arrival. The fact was that the bells rang and no matter how much the prior tried to find out who rang the bells; the bells had rung by themselves (D'Espiney, *Don Bosco*, 138).

In the sermon Don Bosco compared his little army to birds that

had been thrown out of their nest and he urged them to pray to Our Lady, to provide them with a more stable and secure place.

Towards evening they returned more numerous and while their cheerful cries deafened the air and everyone ran about enjoying themselves, Don Bosco stood aside watching the recreation sadly when he was surprised by the arrival of a man who offered him a cottage and a nearby shed on rent. Don Bosco immediately went to see the place; he found that it suited his needs. Having spoken to the owner and fixed the price and the conditions; thrilled with the outcome he went back to the boys to tell them where they would meet the following Sunday April 12. It was a moment of indescribable emotion and joy.

After having said a few words on the happy outcome of the pilgrimage to the Madonna of the meadow, he asked everyone to pray the Rosary. It was to be a prayer of gratitude to the heavenly Mother who so quickly and lovingly responded to their prayers (Francesia, *Vita di Don Bosco* 113).

33. That's not fair (1847)

"In the first years of the Oratory...says Fr. Turchi, a youngster from Biella arrived in Turin and went to confession at the church of *La Consolata* and then proceeded to the hostel of St. Francis where he was accepted as a student. The prefect welcomed him kindly since it was the first time he had met him.

Don Bosco was talking to his boys who had surrounded him to look into their hearts and they recalled some surprising revela-

tions he made of certain secrets. He and his boys were talking about discernment of hearts, and the lads were recalling instances of Don Bosco's surprising revelations. The newcomer listened to it all and then abruptly blurted out, "Father, I dare you to read my sins. You can tell them out loud if you wish."

"Come closer," Don Bosco replied.

He gazed at the boy's forehead and then whispered into his ear. The lad turned a deep red. Don Bosco looked at him once more and again whispered what perhaps were more details about the boy's past life. At this he broke into tears, exclaiming, "It's not fair! You're the priest who heard my confession at *La Consolata* this morning!"

"He's not!" his companions chorused. "Don Bosco has been here all day. How could he know if you had gone to confession? You are all wrong! You don't know Don Bosco yet. This happens all the time." At this the boy relaxed, and from then on had the greatest trust in Don Bosco. I was present at this scene so was Michael Rua [then a young cleric]. He can testify to its truth. (EBM, VI, 260-261).

34. I've lost my sins! (1847)

Who can forget the case of one of them who, when he had made his spiritual retreat at the Oratory for the first time had written his sins and lost the sheet? The poor fellow wandered among his companions asking them in half Italian and half Lombard: "Who found my sins?" Everyone looked strangely at him with a smile of pity at the strange seeker who seemed out of luck. They couldn't

but admire his simplicity! But he met Don Bosco who, in his fatherly fashion encouraged him to come for confession. How could he refuse?

- But I don't know anything!
- I myself will tell you the sins, don't be afraid.
- But how's that possible?
- Come and try.

He went with him to the humble little chapel where he felt fervent and happy, as if he were near Mary Help of Christians and he knelt nearby.

When he heard himself not sounding as confused as he thought he would be about the exact painful state of his conscience he felt he was beside himself and said in his dialect: "A le' lù! A le' lù!" it was almost as if he were saying: "It's you who found my sins."

We used to try this God-given gift that was given to Don Bosco to read the souls of his boys and we often said: Yes, Lord! He does the examination and the assessment leaving us completely serene (Francesia, *Don Bosco amico delle anime* 184).

35. The Multiplication of the Hosts (1848)

The first multiplication (1848)
It was one of the most solemn celebrations at the Oratory. Several hundred boys were ready to receive communion. Don Bosco had celebrated Mass and was convinced that there were six ciboria of consecrated hosts in the tabernacle. But at communion time, to his utter surprise he realized that the sacristan had forgotten to fill them. Unable to resign himself to sending the boys away without communion, he raised his eyes to

heaven and started distributing the few hosts that he had. And behold, to the great astonishment of the sacristan Buzzetti, who was all confused with regret about what his forgetfulness would do to Don Bosco, the hosts multiplied in the hands of the saint who was able to distribute communion to 650 boys. When the service was over, Buzzetti was beside himself with joy and surprise. He told everyone what had happened and as evidence he showed them the ciboria he had prepared lying in the sacristy.

Fifteen years later, on October 18, 1863, Don Bosco himself confirmed the truth of this fact. When asked about the veracity of Buzzetti's story, he turned serious and replied: "Yes there were a few hosts in the ciborium, nevertheless I was able to distribute communion to all those who approached the sacred table; and they were not a few. Through this miracle, Our Lord Jesus Christ wished to show how much he likes well-prepared and frequent communions.

Those present plucked up courage and went further asking him what he felt in the face of this miracle. Don Bosco serenely said: "I was moved, but calm. I thought: the miracle of consecration is greater than the miracle of the multiplication. But God be praised in everything!"

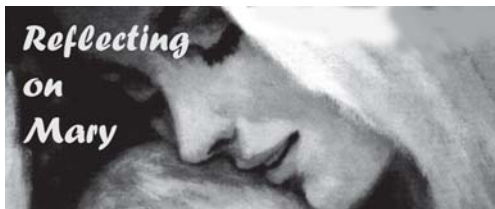
The second multiplication (1854)

This miracle would have remained forgotten but a providential conversation with his sons, one day in 1861 offered Don Bosco the opportunity to speak about it; and he did it with the

fascinating simplicity with which he always narrated the most extraordinary things. He was speaking about some boys of the house who, because of their exceptional goodness were favoured by God with supernatural gifts. After the saint had narrated some prodigious facts, one of those present, with childlike trust asked him if the Lord had granted him any Eucharistic vision.

- With regard to the Holy Host I was never favoured with extraordinary signs except however, the multiplication of the hosts. That happened in 1854 and was a really beautiful and surprising event. One morning, being the only priest in the house, as was the custom of those times, I celebrated Mass for the community. After having consumed the sacred species I began distributing communion to the boys. I had a few hosts in the ciborium, may be ten or twelve.

At first, having given communion to a few I did not think of breaking the hosts. But having distributed communion to the first ones, others came and still others, so that row upon row of boys came as many as three or four rows. There were at least fifty communions. I wanted to go back to the altar after the first few had approached the sacred species, but I seemed to see the same quantity in the ciborium and I continued to give communion without realizing that the particles were diminishing. When the last one came to receive communion, to my extreme surprise I found myself with just one host in the ciborium and I gave it to the boy. Without knowing how those hosts multiplied. □



4 - THE MAGNIFICAT

by Don Giorgio Chatrian

Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord...as he promised to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever" (Lk. 1:46-55).

What's our prayer like?

Someone might say he is very faithful to his morning and evening prayers. That may be a good habit breathed into him by his family. Even putting on his PJs and going to bed or having his breakfast with a milky coffee are traditions...

Others will say they pray when they feel like it, at times using words that spring from the heart. Not always going "where the heart takes us"; often life choices require reason and will...

We may also meet those who only pray occasionally and then complain that God doesn't listen to them. But God is no quick-fix solution...or spare tire.

Here's a small test to gauge your prayer with some questions to answer sincerely.

WHEN: The precise time when I pray during the day.

HOW LONG: Clock-in-hand, the amount of time devoted to

prayer.

WHERE: The ambient in which you pray, the places and moments chosen for prayer.

HOW: What percentage of time, or more concretely the amount of time you dedicate to gratitude, to petition, to forgiveness or other requests.

WITH WHO: Relationship between my personal and community prayer.

AND LIFE: How do you bring prayer into life so that it does not become dry or just an escape?

Now let us look at Mary who, in the Magnificat gives us a prayer, complete and of rare beauty. It is a long list of 'thanks' for all the gifts God has given her even before she asked; always remaining aware that she is poor and in need of forgiveness.

To pray then is to thank God for all he gives us every day and to ask for his forgiveness for not having recognized or thanked God for this goodness. Only at the end should we present our requests. If they coincide with the things for which Mary gives thanks to God in the Magnificat,



we are playing it safe: then we're sure we will be heard.

And above all, we will succeed in taking prayer to life like Mary, who, after singing her thanks, remained three months to serve her cousin Elizabeth.

My heart sings to my God and cries out to everyone about the joy I experience believing in him, because he loves me as I am: fragile and unsure.

Only for this very reason will they remember me in the future.

God is so generous with me and pronounces my name with such respect, while the rich find themselves empty-handed and their lives cast aside for nothing.

Finally, God came to meet the Church that is the community gathered around himself, his Son and the Spirit, thus remembering his immense capacity to love and forgive everyone and always, as he promised from the beginning,

to Abraham and the Jewish people right up to the apostles and the disciples at the time of Jesus.

So it is for me, for us and for all those who come after us and forever!

As you will notice this is a "translation" in current English. If you want you can read the other edition:

1.

God loves me and loves my story: frail and without any security...

And truly: on his Word I lay the foundations of all my futures. God was very generous with me and those who believe in Him!

I will always praise his love whenever I pray. **Magnificat! Magnificat! Magnificat!**

2.

In addition to being good, God shows his power towards the supposedly great.

If you build your whole life on yourself and riches, you will find yourself empty handed or full of hollow power.

Hunger for bread and the meaning of life, these my God will satisfy. **Magnificat! Magnificat! Magnificat!**

3.

God came to meet the Church with forgiveness and love in his hands:

It was the promise he made to believers and to all who follow Christ.

I will sing to the Lord for these gifts! Thanks to the Father for the Son: it is he who gives us the Holy Spirit, the source of life for eternity.

As in Mary, the joy of believing, loving and hoping, springs from all hearts! **Magnificat! Magnificat! Magnificat!** □

NEWSBITS

VATICAN CITY

"We waited and hoped for unity for years. Now the east wind has finally arrived, and you can hear the footsteps of the approaching spring. They use simple and evocative images, the Catholics of Shizhuang, to tell what they saw happening between them in this March 2019. First, the mass of reconciliation between the "official" and "underground" Catholic communities, celebrated on March 3 by Bishop Francis An Shuxin following the path of unity and mutual forgiveness suggested by Pope Francis. Then, the communion lived and experienced in a common enterprise, of great symbolic impact: the collective construction of a "temporary" church, inside an abandoned factory.

Shizhuang is a village of 2000 inhabitants, 80% of whom are

Catholics. Until recently, priests and faithful of the so-called "underground" communities celebrated their masses in private homes. After the reconciliation at the beginning of March, it was immediately understood that the premises used by the "official" community would not be able to fit all the baptized Catholics of the village, finally willing to share the Eucharistic liturgies and to live and manifest their full sacramental communion. At the first liturgical celebrations of the reconciled Catholic community, too many people were unable to enter the place and were left outside, exposed to the spring rains and the cold still chilling in northern China. Thus, the Catholics of the village of the diocese of Baoding began a fundraiser to build an adequate size church. And in the meantime they asked to be able to re-adapt the premises of a factory, that had been



Teams of "builders" who have transformed an abandoned factory into a church

abandoned for 30 years, as a temporary space in which to gather to pray and celebrate the Eucharist.

After obtaining the consent of the civil authorities, the priests and laity spontaneously organized into work teams to convert the old factory into a place for prayer, liturgies and sacramental celebrations.

The story of this community adventure, which reached *Vatican Insider*, describes with emotion the people of God who "began to build the house of God". Men and women are working for the construction free of charge, sweating and getting their hands dirty together. The rest of the community provides the "builders" with building materials, along with supplies and food to ensure lunch and dinner for the workers. They also work at night, and during the work sessions, the teams of builders live together moments of prayer and pay visits to the Blessed Sacrament.

The work, offered free of charge, visibly springs from the shared gratitude that the Catholics of Shizhuang experience as a distinctive feature of this ecclesial season. "If you ask them where they find the strength and energy to work together," the report reads, "they simply answer that they are happy, and for that reason sometimes they don't even notice the effort. Everyone is tired, but on their faces you can feel gratitude and thanksgiving to God".

During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), it was Chinese cathedrals and churches that

were transformed into factories, warehouses and stables. Already in August 1966 Mao Zedong had declared that "religion no longer exists in China".

At the end of the 'seventies, when Deng Xiaoping brought the country out of those difficult years, new wounds were opened in Chinese Catholicism around the destiny of those ill-treated and ill-mannered places of worship: did it make sense to reopen those houses of God, as the government in fact asked, and to begin to celebrate baptisms, marriages, the daily Eucharistic sacrifice and funerals? Or was it better to continue to celebrate masses in the discretion of one's own home, sheltered from the monitoring of the power that had persecuted the Church of Christ?

Today, in the chiaroscuro time that the Catholic Church is going through in China, there are still places of mistreated worship for they don't "conform" to the rules imposed by the local political apparatus. But there are also abandoned industrial spaces that are turned into places in which to celebrate the Eucharist, with the permission of government officials. Scree walls and clean concrete floors are the witnesses of the reconciliation of hearts between brothers and sisters who have been divided for decades. A miracle that can't be imposed by decree by anyone, neither by the canonical dispositions of the Vatican, nor - much less - by the pressures of the civil powers.

Gianni Valente, La Stampa

ONE OF THOSE DAYS

Fintan M. Tallon

It had been one of those days when all of the people I was due to meet were unable to keep the appointment for valid reasons.

In a downcast mood I left my hotel and began walking towards Fifth Avenue in New York. Quite unplanned my journey took me past St. Patrick's Cathedral and I went to pay homage to God before his altar.

As I prayed somebody touched my shoulder and looking up my eyes met those of a middle aged lady in very obvious distress.

"I'm sorry to intrude" she said hesitatingly "but I need to talk to somebody. You see my husband has just been taken to hospital with a cardiac arrest and the doctors are uncertain as to his prospects. They suggested that I go for a walk and come back in about an hour when, perhaps, they might be able to be more definitive."

I rose and taking her arm led her from the Cathedral. I suggested we go into a nearby restaurant for a tea or - coffee where we could talk more comfortably.

"Tell me what happened?" I asked as we sat at a table.

"My name is Ruth Jones. We are both from London" she responded "and are here for a brief holiday. Just as we left our hotel this morning Jack collapsed and was taken by ambulance to the hospital. Fortunately I had our travel insurance in my bag and admission proved no difficulty. However, we have no friends in New York and the hospital said they needed at least an hour to make a firm diagnosis." I introduced myself and asked if her hus-



band had any previous attacks such as this. She shook her head.

"No" she responded. "Jack retired over a week ago from his job with a London insurance group. Our two children are living in Australia and we had arranged to meet them in San Francisco in a week's time."

"What prompted you to go into St. Patrick's Cathedral?" I asked. "Are you Catholic?" She shook her head and said that both she and her husband were Church of England but when she saw the open church it seemed natural to go in and seek the Lord's help.

I poured her a cup of tea and she began to sip from the cup.

"Are you a Catholic?" she asked and when I confirmed she added "I can't place your accent are you English?"

"No," I responded "I'm Irish. But do remember that our merciful Father hears our prayers ir-

respective of where we worship Him."

At the hospital

"Would it help" I asked "if I went to the hospital with you and we can then find out Jack's precise position and the medical prognosis?"

She assented eagerly to my suggestion.

At the hospital I asked to see the doctor looking after Jack. His name was Liam McNally from Dublin and I knew his parents very well. When I introduced myself he assured me that he was reasonably confident that Jack's attack was fairly mild and he would recover and told us that we could visit him after they had completed some other tests.

Half an hour later we both went to see Jack and he was amused as to how Ruth had ensnared a stranger to come to her aid. I got the telephone number of their children from Jack and undertook to let them know what had hap-

pened.

I phoned them with the good news about their father and they said they would fly to New York within the following two days and I arranged to book them into the same hotel as that of their parents.

When I reported to Jack and his wife they were profuse in their thanks.

By morning the news from the hospital was excellent and I was able to leave the couple to await the arrival of their children without carrying the fear of any sinister development.

My schedule did not allow me time to meet the children but I received a lovely letter of thanks from both Jack and Ruth some weeks later and we agreed that we would get together in London on my next visit to that city.

As I returned home to Ireland I realised that the Lord had planned that day for me and given me a task to perform in His name. □ (From the St. Martin's Messenger, Ireland 2006)

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.

To practise this devotion in time of danger, stress, special need or temptation, is a sure means to obtain Our Lady's help.

Grateful and humble thanksgiving for the numerous favours received over many many years through the faithful recitation of the 3 Hail Marys. Our Lady has always been with us through it all; sheltering us with her heavenly protection and granting us all our requests. Thank you Mama Mary.

Wilma Fernandes

I sincere and profusely thank dearest Mother Mary, my ardent Mother, for granting me and my family, many, many favours through the recitation of the three Hail Marys. I am ever grateful to my mother. Dear Lord Jesus and Mother Mary, protect and bless my two darling daughters, 2 sons-in-law and my precious little grand daughter through their lifetime. I am sure your merciful eyes always look upon them and your tender hands will bless them.

An ardent devotee
Thank you so very much for, through the recitation of teh 3 powerful Hail Marys my financial debt has been resolved to an extent and helped me stay calm in days when the situations were very dreadful and stressful.

Candida Pereira, Mumbai
My daughter had cleared her IPCC (Inter CA exams) and was looking forward to continuing her career in a suitable CA firm. At first her efforts through friends and acquaintances proved futile. Having received the February issue of the *Madonna*, I was inspired to the *Devotion of the three Hail Marys* (adding the *Memorare* at the end). Within the first month she was given an online test by a fairly suitable firm in which she didn't fare well because the questions pertained to a syllabus that was different than what she was prepared for. We continued to persevere in prayer for a suitable opening. Within the next month she was called for an interview to teh same suitable firm. In continue to place my trust in Mother Mary and through the recitation of the Three Hail Marys, I am sure Mother Mary will aid my petition.

T. Gonsalves, Mumbai

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

Thank you Jesus & Mary for the many miracles you have worked in my life. I am sorry for the long delay in expressing my gratitude for the numerous favours received from Heaven. I pray that you continue to bless and protect me and my loved ones always.

Smita Rosario, Mumbai

Thank you Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and dearest Mother Mary for the abundant blessings and favours received.

Viola Rebello, Mumbai

Thank you Mother Mary, Don Bosco and St. Martin for looking after a member of my family, I am most grateful. *A Devotee*
We thank Don Bosco for giving us two children in 2012 and 2014. Sorry for the delay. Our sincere thanks to Our Lord Jesus Christ and St. Dominic Savio too.

E. D'Souza, Goa

Thanks for all the blessings we received from Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio. Keep us always in your care.

Mrs. Matilda Carvalho, Mumbai

Our sincere thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary and the saints for helping our son in securing a good job and for the many favours received.

F. & C. Gomes, Mumbai

Our heartfelt thanks to Our Lady for having blessed our daughter-

(Continued from pg. 34)

in-law Sindhu Pushpa with a baby boy.

L. Benilts

Dear Jesus, Mother Mary and Don Bosco thank you for blessing our family abundantly. Thank you for keeping my brother safe and healthy. Thank you for keeping us all healthy and happy. *F. D'Souza*
My sincere thanks to Jesus, Mother Mary and Don Bosco for the successful graduation of my children from college and high school; for Maya's college admission with a scholarship; for our citizenship approval; for keeping my mother mentally at peace and secure. Please continue to watch over her; for healing my Amini aunty, and uncle George and for their sound health; for peace in my husband's job were there were many enemies and for saving and restoring me back to health.

Mrs. P. Samagond, Australia

**THANKS TO DEAR
ST. DOMINIC SAVIO**



My sincere thanks to Our Lord Jesus, dear Mother Mary Help of Christians and St. Dominic Savio for blessing my daughter with a safe delivery and the gift of a normal healthy baby girl after 8 years of marriage.

A Devotee

Our grateful thanks to Mary Help of Christians and St. Dominic Savio for numerous favours and blessings and especially for the safe delivery of both our daughters-in-law with loving, healthy and happy baby girl and boy. Thank you very much for giving us such lovely grandchildren.

Alban and Odette Mendonca

Thank you, dear Jesus, Mother Mary, St. Dominic Savio and Don Bosco for all the favours received.

A Devotee

My grateful thanks to Mary Help of Christians and St. Dominic Savio for the many favours received. Please continue to bless me and my family.

E. Barretto

My sincere thanks to Our Lord Jesus, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and Dominic Savio for many favours received. Please do continue to bless my family always.

Patricia B.

**APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER
NOVEMBER 2019**

Universal: That a spirit of dialogue, encounter, and reconciliation emerge in the Near East, where diverse religious communities share their lives together.

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MARY WAS THERE

On May 16th 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 were 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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