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O Lord,
as we honour how
the Blessed Virgin Mary
suffered with her Son,
may we complete
in ourselves
for the Church's sake
what is lacking in
the sufferings of Christ,
who lives and reigns
for ever and ever.

Adapted from the proper
of the 15th September

From The Editor's Desk

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HERE

It was a beautifully calm morning in Koregaon Park, with a few early risers enjoying their walks and a dedicated sweeper working diligently along the curb as part of the "Clean Pune" initiative. He was clearing away last night's debris, like beer cans and pizza boxes, ensuring the area stayed welcoming as it should. As I pedalled by, I spotted a group of tall, determined men, hard hats in hand, making their way purposefully toward a construction site somewhere in the city. Their energy was palpable, even though it seemed they hadn't had a meal the night before.

It was evident they weren't locals; they had likely travelled from the rural hinterland, where job opportunities are scarce. Their commitment to work and support their families back home was inspiring. In just a few weeks, they would return to their villages with the earnings they had fought hard to secure. Observing them sparked deep reflection within me about the challenges of homelessness and hunger that affect so many people even in our city. It reminded me that, right here in our community, there are individuals facing significant hardships. There's so much we can do to make a positive difference in their lives!

The magnitude of this issue can feel utterly overwhelming, yet I find myself compelled to consider what I can do to make a difference. As I gaze out the window while writing this editorial, I am acutely aware of my own comfort—certain of my next meal and a warm bed awaiting me tonight. Still, a nagging question tugs at my conscience: Do I genuinely care about what I witnessed this morning? Am I ready to seek out creative ways to help those I may encounter?

It's all too easy to overlook the struggles of others as I rush to catch the 9:07 metro to District Court here in Pune. Yet, what if I took just a moment to buy an extra 'vada-pav' for someone in need before I boarded the escalator? It may seem like a small gesture, but could I, even for a fleeting instant, bring a smile to that weary mother carrying her child—her dirt-stained and desperate hands stretched out, pleadingly?

She may not even notice as I place the 'vada-pav' in her hand, but I know in my heart that I could barely ease her hunger and that of her baby. What if I don't succeed, does it really matter? I tried to do my part. It might not seem monumental—because it isn't—but I truly believe that by addressing hunger "one mouth at a time," I can contribute something meaningful. You should try it...there are opportunities along the way...the Lord has put them there to tickle your generous 'bone.'

This is my opportunity to make a difference in this world. As I stand on this clod of earth, I hear a voice from beyond saying, "You fed me." In that moment, I realize I am not just fulfilling a need; I am embracing my role in creating a ripple of compassion in our society. Don't shy away from these moments. They come thick and fast, if you have the inclination.

Fr. Ian Doultton, sdb

EXPERIENCING DESIRE

by Monica Cornali

The world of desires reveals to the human being that he is potentially infinite and at the same time reveals his limitation.

The origin of the word “desire” is one of the most beautiful discoveries in the study of etymology. This term comes from Latin and is made up of the preposition “de,” which conveys a privative meaning, and “sidus,” meaning star. To desire, therefore, translates to “missing the stars.” The prefix “de” can also signify origin or provenance, giving another interpretation: “coming from the stars.”

Both meanings are echoed in the Bible when it speaks of longing for God: “As the hind longs for streams of water, so my soul longs for you, O God” (Psalm 42:2).

From a psychological perspective, it’s important to distinguish between desire and need. When a need is characterized by arrogance, compulsiveness, or an irrepressible drive, it is often referred to as compulsion. This term also comes from Latin and means to push with violence. Unlike desire, compulsive behaviour is an uncontrollable automatism that the indi-

vidual experiences almost passively.

I can choose to postpone my desires and wait. In this waiting period, my desires become more refined, conscious, and profound. The main difference between desire and compulsion lies in the result of their satisfaction: when I fulfil a desire, I reach a higher state of fulfillment. Conversely, when I satisfy a compulsion, I may experience a brief sense of relief, but this often lasts only a moment before another compulsion arises.

Desire has a subtle and complex nature, intertwined with history, memory, and personal affections, while also relating to our values. It is connected to fantasy and often does not immediately manifest in

a tangible object. Desire seeks what we identify as fundamental reality, which provides direction and meaning to our lives and actions. It allows us to channel our energies toward what we value most. However, if desire is not recognized and nurtured, it can easily be mistaken for need. Needs are simpler to satisfy but tend to be more superficial and transient, often resulting in a sense of saturation that leaves one feeling unsatisfied and empty. Some expressions of youthful deviance and destructiveness can be linked to this inner emptiness that individuals attempt to fill. Adults, too, can experience this; in moments of loneliness or frustration, they might fill their emotional voids through compulsive consumption, buying objects in a largely unconscious manner.

Desire, ultimately, arises from a synthesis of cognition, affection, will, and transcendence. The

realm of desire reveals to humanity that we are potentially infinite, yet simultaneously highlights our limitations. This constitutes the paradoxical and tragic condition of being human: we are limited beings who yearn for the infinite. To truly understand our desires, we must elevate ourselves—both in thought and in spirit—to a broader horizon than the one we usually settle for.

Educating desire involves embracing mystery, taking risks, and welcoming surprises. It requires us to empty ourselves, to be silent, and to listen. As St. Paul writes, “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Cor 2:9).

Reflecting on these words, Brother Roger Schutz, the founder of the Taizé Community, posed the question: “Do you feel a sense of happiness?” □

To God, who says to you, “Ask what you will,” what will you ask? Think carefully; expand your desires and extend your ambitions. It is not just anyone speaking, but God Almighty, who invites you to ask for anything you want. If you love wealth, desire all the earth, so that all who are born within it will be your subjects. When will you become the master of all the earth? You might want to covet the sea, though you cannot live in it. In your greed, the fish will outsmart you. Perhaps you will aim to rule the islands. Go further; ask for the air, even though you cannot fly. Stretch your desires up to the sky and claim the sun, the moon, and the stars as yours. For He who created all things has said, “Ask what you will.” Yet, you will find nothing more valuable, nothing better than He who created everything. Ask Him who made all things, and in Him, you will find everything He has created. All things have great value and beauty, but what could be more attractive than Him? All things are strong, but what is stronger than He? And nothing is more generous than He Himself. (Augustine of Hippo, *Commentary on the Psalms*, 34, 2, p. ..87)



ANGRY WITH GOD

Fr. Morgan Costelloe

I got very angry with God," Rita said, "I know that it was a sin, but I could not help it." She was describing her journey through grief after the death of her husband, Tom, in a road accident. "It didn't seem fair to take him away when the children needed him most," she went on. It may not have been a sin at all, for feeling angry with God is one of the normal stages of bereavement following the death of a loved one. It is very distressing, but often a necessary experience before we can recover from a death in the family.

Why God allows tragic events in our lives is a mystery. God's ways are not our ways, we tell ourselves. They are beyond our understanding, but we are convinced at times that we could improve upon them, if he gave us the opportunity!

Two truths are necessary to ease us through the crisis of bereavement. The first is that our God is a God of love. The Scriptures affirm this again and again "I have loved you with an everlasting love," he tells us (Jer 31:3). Jesus explained this further: "As the Father loves me, so I have loved you. Abide in my love" (Jn. 15:9). He gave us the parables of the Good Shepherd and the Prodigal Son

to emphasise this wonderful truth. God loves Rita, her five children and her departed husband, Tom. He loved him and still loves him, even more than they do.

How can this be reconciled, then, with Tom's tragic death? Firstly, God does not cause death, he permits it. Secondly, he does so because his great knowledge, his omniscience, tells him that this is the exact time and manner to call Tom to himself. But only prayer and faith, a desperate blind trust in his loving care, can carry us through this mystery.

The second truth is that God has a special mission for everyone born into our world — a mission that is measured in days and hours. Once that has been accomplished the person is called home to God. In that sense, Tom's accident was no accident!

This theme is found in the novel: *"The Bridge of San Luis Rey."* When the bridge collapsed men, women and children, fathers, mothers



and babes-in-arms, went hurtling to their deaths. Onlookers cried: "How cruel is God!" Relatives and friends repeated the complaint at the funerals. But the story probes beneath the surface and shows that God chose precisely the right moment for each victim to die. Each had fulfilled at that moment the task that God had given him, or her, to do.

Death comes often as a release also from pain and old age. It is hard for close relatives and friends who see their loved ones dying and mourn their loss; but it is a God-sent benefactor for those, who are crippled, bedridden or worn out from living. Death is a gentle sleep from a loving God with an awakening in heaven.

When it comes suddenly and tragically, as in Tom's case, its immediate effects on his family are

shattering. Widows like Rita remark sometimes: "I have lost my husband." They would find more consolation in the expression: "I have given him back to God." When my own sister died at seventeen my grieving parents chose a verse for her memorial card, which carried that message:

"Lord, she was thine and not our own. You have not done us wrong. We thank you for thy precious loan Afforded us so long."

Getting angry with God is with some people one of the normal stages of bereavement. It is an acid test of our faith and trust in God as we work our way through our grief. An ejaculation like 'Thy will be done' will help us on our sad journey. It is good to remind ourselves, however difficult it may appear, of the fatherhood and loving providence of God. There are no solutions, here and now, to the questions which keep nagging us: "Why did my loved one die?" "Why did he die in such circumstances?" But as Rita accepted about Tom's death much later there are answers, but they are known to God and not to us at present.

*For every pain that we must bear,
For every burden, every care,
There is a reason.
For every grief that bows the head,
For every tear-drop that is shed,
There is a reason.
For every hurt, for every plight,
For every lonely, pain-racked night,
There is a reason.
But if we trust God as we should
All must work out for our good.*

He knows the reason. □

REASONS TO BELIEVE - 10

by Franco Molinari

Christian love

The incredible power of love plays a crucial role in restoring our psychological balance. Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, encapsulated the secret to happiness with the phrase "*Lieben und arbeiten*" – to love and to work.

A fulfilled individual embodies both helpfulness and love, a sentiment echoed in the Gospel for centuries. Notably, St. Paul, rather than Lenin, first stated, "Whoever does not work should not eat," highlighting the importance of diligence.

Christ's teachings on love are radical; He commands us to love not only one another but also our enemies. This challenges Ernest Renan's view that Christianity is merely a variant of Essenism. The 1947 discovery of the Essenes' codices revealed that Jesus's teachings on love resonated deeply with the Essenes, who formed an exclusive community that often shunned out-

siders.

Unlike the Essenes—who barred sinners and outsiders—Jesus actively reached out to marginalized individuals, including women with troubled pasts. His message of love transcended societal divisions, offering a transformative principle that urges compassion in our lives.

This choice shows that Jesus was not limited by the conventions of his time; he stood apart from the prevailing attitudes, showcasing remarkable character. His revolutionary message of forgiveness is illustrated by his prayer for his executioners: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." It's moving to consider that, in his suffering, he found the strength to pray for



those who caused him pain, prompting us to reflect on the depth of his compassion.

Pope John Paul II, after being wounded on May 13, 1981, expressed a similar grace when he said, "I forgive my brother the assassin and pray for him." The love of one's enemies is often deemed impossible.

Montefiore, a prominent Jewish scholar, recognizes that the love of enemies is absent in the Old Testament. He argues that while such a precept may seem beautiful, it can also be harmful. Some Muslims critique the idea of turning the other cheek, noting that war is an inescapable part of history, and the Quran sets rules to mitigate its excesses.

This reasoning may have been valid until recently. In today's context of nuclear weapons, the choice is stark: embrace love for one's enemies or risk catastrophe. The atomic bomb, like the wolf of Gubbio, succumbs not to weapons but to the power of love.

The litmus test

The essence of Christian faith rests on the truth of the Risen Christ. Consider the graves of historical figures—Napoleon and others—all marked with "Here lies." In contrast, Christ's tomb should declare, "Here he does not lie." The efforts of armed guards to protect it were futile, overshadowed by divine power.

Those who orchestrated



Church of the Holy Sepulchre -
Jerusalem

Christ's death even bribed soldiers to spread the false claim that his disciples stole his body. St. Augustine counters this argument: "If they were asleep, how could they witness the theft? And if they were awake, why did they not stop it?"

While sceptics admire Jesus as a remarkable teacher of love and peace, they often deny his divinity. This perspective is flawed. If Jesus is not God, then he is a fraud. How can he embody goodness and serve as our guiding light if he falsely claimed to be divine?

The challenge is to recognize Christ's full identity and the transformative power belief in the Risen One can bring to our lives.

The truth is clear: Christ is risen. Numerous accounts of his post-resurrection appearances provide compelling evidence of this historical event. Jesus revealed himself not just to his devoted followers, but also to former enemies like Saul, proving that his Resurrection is a transformative reality.

Without the Resurrection, we cannot explain the remarkable

courage of the apostles who once hid in fear. Denying this miracle only reinforces the validity of others. Consider Peter, who transformed from a frightened individual into a bold proclaimer: "People of Israel, listen! Jesus the Nazarene, whom God empowered with wonders, was handed over for execution by you, and you crucified him. But God raised him from the dead!"

Additionally, the existence of the Church speaks volumes. If the Resurrection were a myth and Christ a fraud, how do we account for the Church's incredible emergence and lasting presence throughout history? The Church itself serves as powerful testimony to the truth of the Resurrection and the life-changing impact of faith.

The Czechoslovak philosopher Machovec, an honest atheist, acknowledges, "My rational beliefs prevent me from accepting the resurrection of Christ. Yet, I struggle to explain the moral transformation of the apostles and the rise of the Church." This insight is found in "Jesus for Atheists," edited by Cittadella.

Critics of religious faith often make sweeping claims, and one of the most radical is Alfred Loisy. His research on Christianity's origins has captivated many and shaken the faith of numerous believers.

Loisy argued that the stone sealing Jesus' tomb was a symbolic addition rather than a historical fact. However, recent archaeological findings in north-eastern Jerusalem, which uncovered tombs with large millstones rolled in front, challenge this



Alfred Loisy

assertion. This evidence strongly supports the resurrection narrative and confronts attempts to deny its historical basis.

Loisy claimed that the rock-hewn tomb was merely an imaginative concept meant to fulfil prophecy. However, for those seeking the truth, a visit to the Sanhedria, just a kilometre and a half from the Damascus Gate, reveals numerous ancient tombs carved into the stone.

Loisy underestimated the significance of the hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes brought by Nicodemus, which he labeled as a theatrical embellishment. Recent research demonstrates that this mixture was crucial as an antiputrefactive agent, affirming the authenticity of ancient burial customs.

It is an oversimplification to assert the Gospel's infallibility, as faith goes beyond scientific proof. Nevertheless, the challenges we create against this narrative will ultimately fall apart, leaving the enduring truths of these traditions intact. □

CARMEN LAVAL

TIME FOR THE SPIRIT

SPRING CLEANING

Spring cleaning is a powerful opportunity for rejuvenation. As the monsoon season ends, the lighter air invites us to embrace this refreshing practice. More than just a chore, cleaning nurtures both self and environment, creating a balance that enhances our well-being. Seize this chance to transform your space and uplift your spirit!

Everyone naturally values cleanliness. As seasons change, we often say, "It's time for a thorough cleaning." The satisfaction of feeling clean, both inside and out, is universally recognized, while "dirty" is viewed negatively. *Decluttering*, or removing unnecessary items, creates a more organized space. The practice of cleaning – physically and mentally – is a transformative philosophy. By letting go of the excess, we create room for growth and clarity, inviting new possibilities and enhancing our well-being.

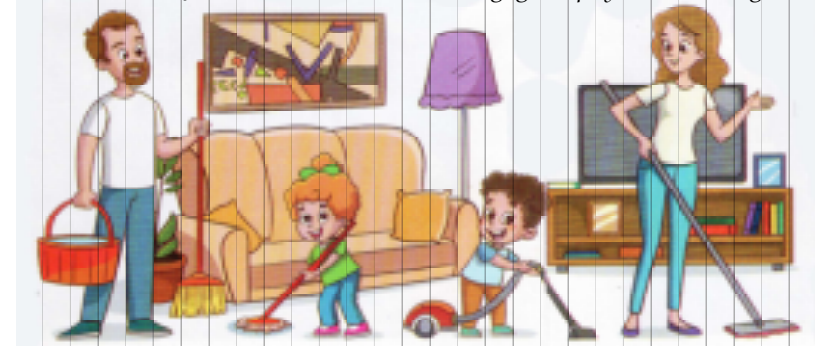
Externals

The cleanliness and order of our surroundings are vital to our daily lives. By investing time in cleaning, organizing, and polishing our homes, we not only improve our environment but also strengthen our connections with loved ones. While many women still carry the burden of domestic work, it's essential for everyone – fathers and

children alike – to join in and share these responsibilities.

Imagine coming home to a tidy space; this can motivate us to maintain cleanliness, easing daily stress and fostering joy. A clean environment enhances our emotional and mental well-being – children can study better in organized spaces, and adults work more productively when things are in order. Let's take action and start this journey toward a cleaner, more harmonious home together!

1. *Eliminate unnecessary items.* Clear out clutter that holds you back.
2. *Keep only what you need.* Start with your wardrobe and consider removing 50% of your clothes. A streamlined wardrobe can create a refreshing sense of freedom.
3. *Organize your belongings.* A tidy space fosters focus and clarity.
4. *Minimize waste.* Make conscious choices for a healthier home and planet.
5. *Engage in physical cleaning.* Po-



lish floors and windows to improve your space while staying active.

6. *Declutter digital devices.* Regularly remove electronic junk from your devices to prioritize what truly matters.

Internals

The bond between our physical environment and our mental and emotional well-being is powerful. When our spaces are bright and clean, we open the door to reflection and creativity. Jesus taught that our inner thoughts and intentions shape who we are, emphasizing the need to cultivate goodness within. Imagine your spirit as a house with rooms full of memories and emotions. It's essential to assess these spaces, deciding what to keep or let go in order to restore harmony.

Here are some impactful actions to "clean up" your inner space:

- *Manage Time Wisely:* Cut down on wasted hours to create meaningful moments.

- *Cultivate Relationships:* Combat loneliness by nurturing friendships and letting go of grudges and judgments.

- *Adopt Positive Habits:* Replace negativity with supportive words and feelings.

- *Connect Spiritually:* Engage in prayer and explore sacred texts to deepen your faith.

- *Serve Your Community:* Volunteer at your local parish church to enrich both the community and your spirit.

By taking these steps, you'll foster a more harmonious inner environment and empower yourself to live with clarity and purpose. Embrace this journey to brighten your spirit!

THE MYSTERIOUS VISITOR

One day, a man heard that God was coming to visit him. "Me?" he worried. "To my house?" In a panic, he rushed through all the rooms, up and down the stairs, climbed to the roof, and hurried to the basement. With the thought of God's impending visit, he saw his home in a new light.

"This is impossible! How can I receive visitors in such a state?" he complained. "Everything is filthy! There's no suitable place to rest, and there isn't even enough air to breathe!"

He threw open the doors and windows wide. "Brothers! Friends!" he called out. "Please help me tidy up, and quickly!"

He began to sweep his house vigorously. Through the thick cloud of rising dust, he noticed someone who had come to help him. With two people working together, it became easier to tackle the mess. They tossed out the useless junk, piled it up, and burned it. They knelt down and scrubbed the stairs and floors with determination. It took many buckets of water to clean all the glass. They also removed the dirt that lurked in the hidden corners of the house.

"We'll never finish!" snorted the man. "We will finish!" said the other calmly. They continued working side by side throughout the day, and at last, the house looked brand new—shiny and smelling clean.

When darkness fell, they went to the kitchen and set the table.

"Now," said the man, "my visitor can come! Now God can come. Where will He be waiting?" "I am already here!" said the other, sitting down at the table. "Sit down and eat with me!"

ST. ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY November 17

Ian Pinto, sdb

The Church's social teaching, right from the time of the landmark encyclical by Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (1891), has consistently emphasized the Church's association with the poor. The Church does not merely recognize poverty but advocates for treating the poor as people who share in the common dignity and rights afforded to every person. The Church is also one of the most consistent organizations in catering to the needs and uplifting the poor. The Church has adopted a stance that is best described as 'a preferential option for the poor.' This stance which reflects more than a catchy slogan ensures that the Church and all its institutions categorically and overtly cater to the needs of the poor. In his first Apostolic exhortation as Pope, Francis expressed his intention that the Church be a "poor Church for the poor" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 2013).

In Silver and Gold

The saint for this month is one of the many great heroes and heroines the Church has produced. She came from affluence but lived out a life of extraordinary charity, compassion and service. Elizabeth was born in 1207 to Andrew II, the rich and powerful King of Hungary, and Queen Gertrude, who was not Hungarian by birth. Her mother's sister, Hedwig, Duchess of Silesia would also go on to become a saint. But that is not



quite sufficient to declare that she came from a spiritually sound patronage. Often, wealth becomes a hindrance to spiritual growth—even Jesus warns his followers to remain detached from wealth (Mk 10:25). This royal family was not immune to these problems. The family, in fact, faced serious trouble that resulted in the assassination of Queen Gertrude, when Elizabeth was 6 and subsequently, father and children were separated. The father continued to reign in Hungary while the children were sent to Thuringia in Germany.

It was there that Elizabeth received a Catholic upbringing and an excellent education. Like children her age, Elizabeth loved to play games; she had an ear for music and was a graceful dancer. She learned culture, manners and royal protocol; attended banquets, wore fine clothes and witnessed first-hand the political machinations that are part of royalty and government. However, and this is clearly the work of grace, in spite of the situation around her, Elizabeth developed a deep faith. She recited her prayers faithfully, began to practice mortification, and already at a young age, showed special attention to the poor whom she helped with a kind word or an affectionate gesture. Elizabeth enjoyed the benefits of royalty, the status and power that came with it and the luxuries, but she developed a sensitivity to the poor that was amazing.

At the tender age of 14, in keeping with Medieval custom, her marriage was arranged so as to secure an alliance with another ruling family. She was wed to Ludwig IV, the prince of Thuringia, with whom she grew up. Ludwig's father died when he was 16 years old and so he had to take up the reins of Government at a young age. Life was tough for the young couple. Not only did they not have age and experience on their side, they were also immediately tasked with a responsibility that was far bigger than they could imagine. While Ludwig embraced his responsibility, Elizabeth struggled to fit in. She preferred times of silence for prayer, and the freedom to serve the needs of the poor rather than hosting banquets and receiving visitors.

This created ill-will among the courtiers and gossip and slander began to make the rounds. However, Ludwig was unperturbed by this. He supported her and openly expressed his admiration and support for her virtuous life.

Elizabeth was introduced to the life and virtues of St. Francis of Assisi through some Franciscan friars who were invited to care for the spiritual needs of the royal family. The friars were exemplary in the life of poverty and through their preaching extolled the vanity of riches and the riches of knowing and love Jesus, especially in the poor. Elizabeth became so invested in the Franciscan way of life that she desired, although secretly at first, to renounce the world like Francis and live in imitation of Jesus. On one occasion, she removed her crown in Church, placed it before the Crucifix and prostrated herself in prayer. When her mother-in-law severely reprimanded her, Elizabeth responded, "How can I, a wretched creature, continue to wear a crown of earthly dignity, when I see my King Jesus Christ crowned with thorns?"

Trading Riches for Heaven

Elizabeth was not content with doing charity, she wanted to associate herself with the poor. Whenever she noticed the poor being cheated, she would willingly pay their debt and give them their due. She loved to go down to the villagers, especially the poorer ones, and personally interact with them and provide for their needs. This humility and generosity won her the love and respect of the peasant class, even as the nobles criticized and slandered

her.

One day, while secretly carrying bread from the castle for the poor, she met her husband in the street. Information that she was stealing from the palace was fed to him. So in an attempt to see things for himself and to pacify the critics, he confronted his wife there and then. When asked to reveal what she held in her apron, Elizabeth let go and beautiful roses fell to the floor. The miracle was met with great excitement, as Ludwig himself proclaimed it as a sign of divine favour that not only vindicated her actions but revealed that she was in fact doing God's work.

There was another miraculous incident that revealed her sanctity and helped her husband's faith to grow. Elizabeth had brought a leper into the palace and had laid him on her own bed to care for him. When Ludwig was scolded by his mother and urged to take action against his wife for defiling the royal bed and jeopardizing the health of all in the palace, he went to remove the infected sheets. No sooner did he touch the sheets, he had a vision in which he was shown that the leper was Christ himself.

At the age of 26, Ludwig died due to disease and Elizabeth took up the reins of Government, though she ruled in the name of her oldest son, Hermann who was the rightful heir even though he was only 4 years old. At the time, Elizabeth was pregnant with their third child, a girl whom she named Gertrude and who would go on to become an abbess. Elizabeth and her children were forced out of the palace as power was usurped by her brother-in-law.

Living stripped of all wealth and luxury, though challenging, was taken up with extraordinary faith and poise by the young Elizabeth. She did not just earn a living to support her family, she also won back, at least to some extent, her status, having received it from relatives that saw the injustice done to her. However, in 1228, on Good Friday, in her hometown, she placed her hands on the altar of a chapel and renounced her own will and all the vanities of the world. She became a member of the Third Order of St. Francis. She is today, the Patroness of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis and of the Franciscan Secular Order. With her little wealth, she constructed a hospital for the poor and dedicated the last few years of her life to their service.

At the age of 25, she died due to illness. Such was the overwhelming devotion to her that Pope Gregory IX canonized her within 4 years. Clearly, Elizabeth was seen as a beacon of hope who brought more than the comfort of things to the poor and needy; she also shared with them the light of Christ. Pope Benedict XVI offers a fitting reflection on how she witnessed to the Church's preferential option for the poor: "In St. Elizabeth we see how faith and friendship with Christ create a sense of justice, of the equality of all, of the rights of others and how they create love, charity. And from this charity is born hope too, the certainty that we are loved by Christ and that the love of Christ awaits us thereby rendering us capable of imitating Christ and of seeing Christ in others" (*General Audience*, 20 October, 2010) □



CHRIST THE LORD, KING!

by Dinesh Vasava, sdb

As we celebrate Christ as King, we see parallels between David and Jesus. Just as David was chosen to lead, Jesus, the Son of David, calls us into a new covenant of love and grace. This invites us to consider our acceptance of His authority in our lives. Are we willing to acknowledge Him as our King?

In Colossians, Paul emphasizes Christ's supremacy, describing Him as the image of the invisible God and the creator of all things. This underscores that Christ's kingship is a reality encompassing all creation, and through His sacrifice, reconciliation with God has been achieved.

Christ's kingdom is defined not by power, but by love, sacrifice, and reconciliation. His willingness to lay down His life teaches us that true kingship is rooted in service. We are challenged to embody these values, promoting peace and reconcilia-



tion in a divided world.

The final passage focuses on Jesus' crucifixion, where those around Him mock His kingship. Yet, in His moment of weakness, He shows profound compassion, promising paradise to the repentant criminal. This highlights the true nature of His kingship—extending grace even amidst suffering.

Reflecting on the paradox of

Christ's kingship reveals that true power lies in love and forgiveness. His kingdom is open to all who turn to Him in faith. As we celebrate Christ the King, let us recognize our need for His mercy and extend that grace to others.

Questions for Reflection

1. How do you define Jesus as King in your life? In what ways does His kingship challenge societal norms or expectations of leadership?

2. Can you recall a specific moment when you profoundly recognized Jesus' presence? How did that experience shape your faith?

3. How do you respond to the promise of forgiveness and salvation that Jesus offers? Are there areas in your life where you struggle to accept this grace?

4. How can you embody the values of Christ's kingship in your interactions with others? What specific steps can you take to reflect His love and mercy in your community?

5. In times of personal struggle or despair, how can you remind yourself of the hope found in Christ? What practices can help you stay connected to this hope?

6. How can you share the message of Christ's kingship and His promise of paradise with those around you? Are there opportunities to witness to others about the transformative power of faith?

Contemplation:

Enter into a moment of silence and stillness. Allow the words

and images of the gospel passage to settle in your heart.

Focus on Jesus' kingship and His presence in your life. Visualize the scene of the crucifixion and the moment of the promise made to the repentant thief. What emotions arise as you meditate on Jesus' compassion and authority during His suffering?

Action

Consider how you can apply the message of this solemnity to your own life. Consider actions such as:

- Identifying a situation where you can demonstrate Christ-like compassion and mercy to someone in need.

- Engaging in a charitable act that reflects the values of Christ's kingship, such as serving the marginalized or advocating for justice.

- Taking time to pray for those who may feel lost or hopeless, offering them the hope that comes from Christ.

Prayer

Engage in a conversation with God. Share your thoughts, feelings, and questions that arise from the passage. Thank God for the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, as you pray the following prayer:

Lord Jesus, King of the Universe, I thank You for Your mercy and the promise of salvation. Help me to recognize Your authority in my life, especially in times of doubt or despair. May I always turn to You in faith, trusting in Your love and forgiveness. Amen. □

Quiet Spaces

A STONE, A CORNERSTONE, CHOSEN AND PRECIOUS

His Most Reverend Excellency Bishop Nicolò Anselmi of Rimini

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, on behalf of Pope Leo XIV

The theme of the 46th *Meeting for Friendship among Peoples*, which will take place in Rimini in the coming days, is an invitation to hope: “a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and he who believes in him will not be put to shame” (cf. 1 Pt 2:6). Indeed, hope does not disappoint (cf. Rm 5:5).

Deserts are generally places that are rejected and considered unsuitable for life. In the most desolate places, where nothing seems to thrive, Sacred Scripture reveals how God powerfully engages with His people. It is in the desert that they are born – not just as a location, but as a transformative journey toward freedom. The Biblical God actively observes and understands their suffering, coming down to liberate them (cf. Ex 3:7-8). He transforms the desert into a fertile space of love and critical choices, reminding us that it is a backdrop for renewal and a deep connection to God’s faithfulness (cf. Hos 2:16).

This year, the Holy Father underscores the importance of the martyrs of Algeria, who exemplify the Church’s mission to unite humanity in the desert, overcoming barriers that divide religions and cultures. They embody the essence of selflessness and the true spirit of mission – a journey not marked by rivalry but by profound love, where those who worship Jesus alone as Lord demonstrate self-giving, even to the point of martyrdom. Let us embrace this call to transform our deserts into gardens of hope and unity. We stand at a crucial moment where meaningful dialogues among Catholics of differing perspectives, as well as with people of other faiths and non-believers, can ignite transformative change. These conversations prepare us to be the “new stones” needed to build a future envisioned by God – one that flourishes when we open our hearts to each other. We can no longer resist the call of the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom founded on peace. Where state institutions struggle to uphold justice, it falls to us – religious communities and civil society – to be prophetic voices. We must confront the challenges of our time and uncover hope from the ruins of innocent suffering.

Pope Leo XIV urged bishops to lead initiatives in non-violence and mediation, transforming fear into opportunities for connection. He envisioned communities as “houses of peace,” where dialogue dismantles hostility and justice and forgiveness are actively practiced. Peace is not merely a dream; it is a practical path paved with daily actions that require our patience, courage, and engagement. In these critical times, we must be vigilant and proactive in our commitment to

manifesting peace. (Address to the Bishops of the Italian Episcopal Conference, 17 June 2025). The Holy Father, therefore, encourages us to give a name and shape to the new, so that faith, hope and charity may be translated into a great cultural conversion. Beloved Pope Francis taught us that “the option for the poor is primarily a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical one” (*Evangelii gaudium*, 198). Indeed, God chose the humble, the small, the powerless, and from the womb of the Virgin Mary, made himself one of them, in order to inscribe his story in our history. Authentic realism, then, is that which includes those who have “another way of looking at things: they see aspects of reality that are invisible to the centres of power where weighty decisions are made” (*Eratelli tutti*, 215). Without the victims of history, without those who hunger and thirst for justice, without migrants and refugees, without the cry of all creation, we will not have new stones. We will continue to follow the delirious dream of Babel, deluding ourselves that touching the sky and making a name for ourselves is the only human way of inhabiting the earth (cf. *Gen* 11:1-9). However, from the outset, denying the voices of others and giving up on understanding one another are failed and dehumanizing experiences. They must be opposed by the patience of encountering an ever-other Mystery, of which the difference of each person is a sign.

Christians today have a vital role in embodying the Gospel of the Kingdom by promoting equitable and sustainable development. To serve the living God, we must reject the worship of profit that undermines justice, meaningful connections, and peace. A faith that ignores the desertification of our world cannot truly follow Jesus Christ.

As the digital revolution poses challenges that may deepen division, we are called to respond with creativity and the spirit of those guided by the Holy Spirit, living as children of God. We can transform barren landscapes into gardens and strive toward the “city of God” envisioned by the saints.

Pope Leo urges us to seek the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Morning Star, to strengthen our commitment within our communities. “In cooperation with all members of the Body of Christ, we can face humanity’s challenges with courage, illuminate the future, and gain clarity in our discernment... if we obey the Holy Spirit together!” (Homily at the Vigil of Pentecost with Movements, Associations, and New Communities, 7 June 2025). Let us unite in faith and action to change our world. □

MEADOW RETREAT

By Pierluigi Menato, T.A. by I.D.

The guesthouse, 'Meadow Retreat,' was situated atop a small hill, allowing stunning views of the sea from every window, even amidst the branches of the surrounding trees. The slope was adorned with vibrant flower gardens and bordered by homegrown fences made from centuries-old trees.

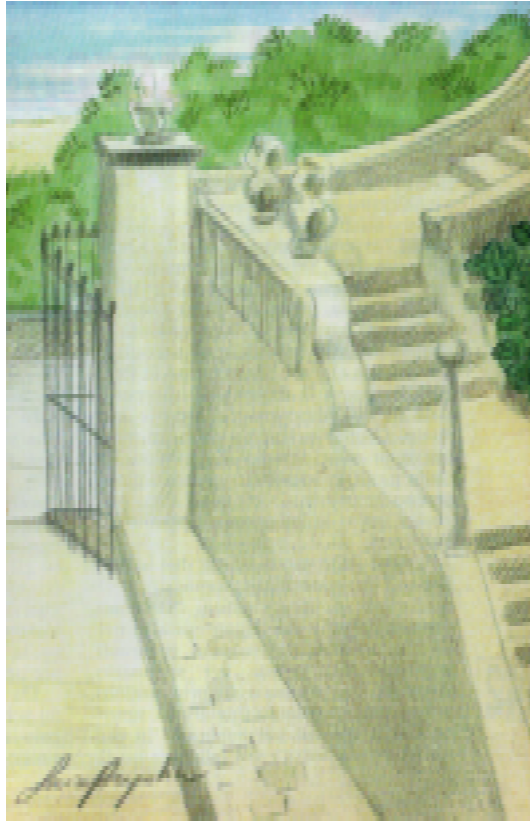
Open year-round, the guesthouse typically attracted professionals seeking peace and quiet, affluent families with many children, and a few elegant ladies who came for brief periods of respite, staying only for short visits, as the location offered limited worldly amusements.

When Helen arrived, she drew the curiosity and interest of all the guests because she was young, beautiful, and dressed in subdued elegance. She became a topic of conversation during evening gatherings and breakfast in the shade of the maritime pines. Initially, people spoke of her with sympathy, but soon a subtle hint of hostility emerged due to, what they thought was her slightly haughty demeanour.

Some people thought she was ill, others believed she was depressed, and some suspected that her life concealed a secret. Eventually,

however, no one paid her any attention. With all the other guests gone, she found herself alone in the boarding house.

It was unusual that she had stayed behind, that she had no company, and that she often took long, solitary walks by the sea-shore or through the pines bordering the property. No one knew much about her. The village postman, who played cards in the small bar in the evenings, mentioned that initially the young



lady received many letters from the same sender, but then, all of a sudden, the correspondence stopped.

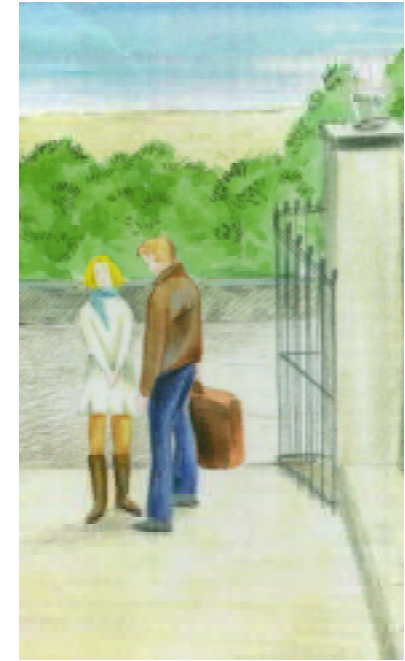
In the stillness of a small town, which was experiencing the winter inertia common to many seaside communities, what was known as Helen's mystery became an increasing topic of interest. Many people wanted to approach her, but they hesitated, fearing they might disturb her, as she often shied away from social interactions.

The first person to get close to her was the young doctor, Albert Corsini, who was called to tend to her because she was ill. Although her illness was not serious, it was prolonged, and during her convalescence, the doctor and Helen grew to be friends.

It was delightful to converse with such a beautiful and intelligent woman. As they sat together by a small fireplace in the grand atrium, with a marble floor covered in thick carpets, they could see the grey sea foaming against the rocks through the large windows framed by trees on the slope.

As his friendship with Helen developed – coloured by the warmth of budding love – the doctor began to neglect his fiancée. This pale, blonde young woman loved him tenderly and anxiously awaited their wedding day.

The girl was called Rose, and it was a name that suited her perfectly. She was soft and delicate, reminiscent of the little hedge roses that let their petals fall gently to the wind. It seemed as though she were a creation from



another era, embodying a sweetness that was both restrained and gentle.

Although Rose was aware of Albert's indifference, she lacked the courage to call him back or confront him. She believed that love cannot be forced and that she would not try to impose her feelings on him.

As days went by, she found herself deluded by hope, while sadness consumed her.

Helen, on the other hand, remained unaware of Rose's feelings. She revelled in the quiet love that lingered, thinking perhaps she could rekindle the life that had recently been shattered by bitter disillusionment.

Time passed in that small, quiet seaside village as everyone discussed Helen, Rose, and the doctor – yet Helen was the only

one who didn't seem to notice.

As summer arrived once more, the lively chatter quieted down, giving way to the newcomers—the first to usher in the new bathing season. However, this tranquillity shattered under the weight of a looming concern that occupied everyone's thoughts and emotions: the war in Vietnam.

By the end of November, the doctor was also called away.

When the lieutenant doctor left, Helen observed from the villa's windows as a young girl accompanied him to the station. She remained silent and didn't ask any questions, but she could sense the situation. When he raised his hand to bid her farewell from the window, she barely acknowledged it and retreated, drawing lace curtain closed.

After that departure, she took a walk along the sea and through the pines, always alone and always feeling like a stranger.



Someone had informed her indirectly that the girl at the station was the doctor's girlfriend and that her name was Rose. That name echoed in her mind, insistent and tormenting. She was fighting a difficult battle. How could she blame him for having loved another woman before her? Was she willing to give up her last hope for a future with someone she barely knew? She felt more than ever the need for a home and the warmth of affection that comforts and soothes. The air was humid and foggy.

In the large, deserted rooms of the guest house, footsteps echoed sadly day and night, intensifying Helen's torment.

On those afternoons, she often took walks along the promenade. One particular day, when the sun was pleasantly warm, she strolled slowly along the road running along the cliffside. Suddenly, she overheard a comment from a bench hidden behind a rocky ledge near where she had stopped:

"And in the meantime, that poor rose is pining for this stranger, for this one whose origins you don't even know."

Helen couldn't grasp the meaning of those uttered words. When she appeared, the two elderly gentlemen sitting on the bench, smoking in the sun, abruptly ceased their conversation. Neither greeted her; instead, they both looked at her with a hostile expression.

Helen walked past them, glancing now at the calm sea shimmering under the illusion of sunlight, and now at the gloomy cliffs that descended steeply.

The image of that reclusive girl accompanied Helen's steps, counting each one. In this spontaneous comparison, Helen felt a new realization: her youth was waning. It was useless to struggle or delude herself; only a few more steps separated her from adulthood. Why then, deny joy to that girl who was approaching life with the same trepidation that she once had?

A sense of almost maternal tenderness, a need for compassion, seized her. Gradually, a feeling of resignation took hold of her.

Step by step, she returned to the "Meadow Retreat." The sun shimmered on the sea, while a gentle breeze scattered fallen leaves along the park avenues, mingling with the pine needles that filtered through the fine gravel.

Behind the large window, the marble atrium appeared, lavishly decorated with carpets and green plants, but deserted. It was there that she had spent delightful hours in calm conversation with

the doctor, where a hope had blossomed only to fade away.

And he? Men are often fervent and strong. He would soon forget Helen and seek refuge in the serene affection of Rose, who would provide him the sweetness of a home here, in this rustic village where he was born.

On the small table that served as her writing desk, a book lay open—one she never tired of reading.

"Only those things are to be feared that have the power to do others harm; not the others, for they are not fearful."

She hesitated for a moment, her gaze drifting to the park. It was December and she shivered in the chill of the evening mists. "Soon," she thought, "everything will be dark." Yet, a distant light, resembling the young woman, Rose, to whom she decided to bring joy to in that moment of sudden resolution.

She rang the reception desk. "Please," she said, "prepare my bill; I am leaving tomorrow morning."

Where to? She didn't yet know. One thing was certain, however: Albert would not take kindly to hearing from her.

With absolute calm, she turned on the bedside lamp and began to read.

She asked the maid, who was quietly passing by, not to disturb her, "What time does the direct flight to Los Angeles leave?"

"Nine o'clock, miss."

"That's fine; please call me at 7 tomorrow morning. Thank you." The guesthouse slipped even deeper into silence, as if there was no one there. □

FIORETTI OF DON BOSCO - 70

by Michele Molineris

314. It's not Almighty God! (1883)

In May 1883, in Paris, a woman fought her way through a crowd, fuelled by the emotion from her mother's heartbreak. She approached Don Bosco and, in deep despair, told him that her son, who worked as an accountant in a government office, had been arrested along with others on suspicion and taken to prison. His case was scheduled to be heard in June, and he was strongly recommended for a favourable outcome.

"But, madam, what can I do about it?" Don Bosco asked her.

"You can free my son, but only if you want to."

"But I am not the omnipotence of God."

"Yes, yes, you can do whatever you wish. Please, I beg you..."

"If I were in Italy, I would have acquaintances to whom I could recommend the matter, but here I know no one."

"Have pity on a poor mother!"

"Well then, turn to the Lord, and every day until then, say this and that prayer."

"Yes, yes, I will do that."

"And I will pray for them."

"Ah, yes, may He grant us the grace that their son may be freed and unharmed."

"But prayer alone is not enough; we need something more."

"Tell me, tell me!"

"A good confession and good communion."

"Well, I have not gone to confession for thirty years, but I promise to do this and whatever else you advise me to do."

"One more thing: be faithful in the future."

"I will be, I promise."

"If so, be of good cheer and trust in the Lord."

As the saint spoke, he took out some medals and handed one to her, saying, "This one is for her." Then he handed her another, adding, "This one is for her son." Finally, he gave her a third medal without saying anything.

The silence of this gesture struck the lady; a mysterious thought crossed her mind that perhaps Don Bosco understood everything about her. It seemed to her that he knew the members of her family, which is why he gave her three medals. At home, there were just her, her son, and her husband. The latter had not approached the sacraments for many years. With these thoughts, she returned home, feeling an expansion of hope in her heart.

Once she got home, she immediately called her husband over and described her visit. She told him about the prayers, the confession, and then handed him the medal, saying, "This is for you." Although he didn't respond verbally, she emphasized, "It's for you, from Don Bosco, a saint who knew you needed it."

Her husband exclaimed, "Well, I'll go and do my duty. I will also go to confession and communion." And indeed, he did go. The lady was overjoyed at the prospect of meeting Don Bosco, whose holiness she praised highly. God blessed her for her faith.

On the day designated for the conclusion of the prayers, her son appeared in court. While many of his companions were condemned, he was acquitted and set free. The

three of them, grateful for their blessings, travelled to Turin on June 20, almost as if to fulfil a vow, but certainly to express their gratitude at the shrine of Mary Help of Christians. (*M.B.*, XVI, 147).

315. Become a nun of St Vincent (1883)

An 18-year-old girl wanted to become a nun but was unsure which congregation to join. Believing that Don Bosco could provide guidance, she made an effort to obtain an audience with him through her confessor, Fr. Bailly, on April 25, 1883. During their meeting, she shared her uncertainties.

Fr. Bailly recommended the Little Nuns, but she found them unappealing, describing them as insignificant. She also considered the Daughters of Charity but felt a strong sense of repulsion toward them, as they had been depicted to her as overly disciplined like military personnel, without a family life and with inaccessible superiors.

After listening to her reflections, Don Bosco paused for a moment to think. Then, without any hesitation, he advised her, "Become a Sister of St. Vincent."

A few years later, the young girl followed his advice and entered the institute under the name Sr. Elisabeth.

Encouraged by the positive reception she received she decided to make another attempt on May 20. She had a friend and peer who had been a deaf mute since birth. Wouldn't Don Bosco be able to heal her? Along with several companions, she returned to the Assumptionists on the day of her second visit, bringing the disabled

girl with her. As a group, they approached the saint and asked him to restore the girl's hearing and speech.

Don Bosco listened to them kindly, took a moment to reflect, and then suggested they pray a novena to Mary Help of Christians. As the novena neared its end, something remarkable happened: one day, people who were deaf or hard of hearing began to echo the words spoken around the girl, and she suddenly heard. With the support of her friends, she also began to speak. (*M.B.* XVI, 182).

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316. Always a friend of children (1883)

On April 29, 1883, Don Bosco celebrated a service in the church of St. Thomas of Villanova in France. A statue of the Madonna, commonly referred to as the Vierge Noire due to her dark colour, is venerated there, though her official title is Notre-Dame de la Bonne Délivrance. It is notable that the young Francis de Sales made his first vow of chastity before this statue. At that time, the statue was housed in the church of St. Stephen des Grès, located in the student quarter on St. James Street. During the revolution, the statue was preserved by devoted individuals and was entrusted in 1806 to the Sisters of St. Thomas of Villanova on Via Sèvres.

During Mass on Sunday, Don

Bosco addressed the congregation, speaking about the importance of charity and the mission of his work. As he was leaving, two young boys had ducked behind him and were trying to squeeze through the crowd. They managed to slip right in front of him and stood there for a moment, gazing at him with smiles on their faces. At a gesture from the saint, one boy took Don Bosco's right hand, and the other took his left, all the while looking up at him and laughing at some of his words. Don Bosco walked slowly along, never letting go of their small hands, allowing them to hold onto him as they made their way together. He also listened and responded to those around him while the two little boys stayed by his side until their parents came to pick them up. This charming scene was noted and commented on in the newspapers.

The Church of St. Thomas of Villanova was located just a short distance from a community of nuns named after the same Spanish saint. Before leaving, Don Bosco visited them. When he met the novice mistress, he advised her, "Do not ask to be replaced."

The nun was considering asking to be excused from her duties, but she had kept this thought to herself.

When Don Bosco stood before all the assembled sisters, he suddenly remarked, "But one sister is missing!" One of the sisters was outside, attending to some visitors, and the saint had something specific to say to her. Upon seeing her, he told her, "She is facing serious internal struggles, but she remains undeterred; no one would suspect the pain she conceals within her heart." (*M.B., XVI, 186*). □



MARY AND THE SAINTS: A COMMUNION OF GRACE

by A.B. Bosco

The month of November holds profound significance for Catholics, as it begins with the celebrations of **All Saints' Day (November 1)** and **All Souls' Day (November 2)**. These two feasts not only reflect on the lives of those who have gone before us but also emphasize the communion that exists between the faithful on earth, the saints in heaven, and the souls in purgatory. At the heart of this communion stands **Mary, the Mother of God**, the most exalted of all saints. Her life, virtues, and role as intercessor have a deep connection to the Church's understanding of sainthood and the communion of grace.

The Communion of Saints: A Shared Bond of Grace

The **Communion of Saints** is one of the key teachings of the Catholic Church, expressed most clearly in the **Nicene Creed**: "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and



the life everlasting." This belief affirms the unity of all believers, whether they are in heaven, purgatory, or still living on earth. The communion is not merely a theoretical bond but a living reality, where the saints in heaven inter-

cede for us, the souls in purgatory are being purified for their eventual union with God, and we on earth strive to live holy lives with the help of the saints and the grace of God.

All Saints' Day is a celebration of this communion, recognizing all those who have achieved holiness and are now in the presence of God. These saints, known and unknown, serve as models of faith and holiness for the Church on earth. Their example shows us the path to sainthood: a life of faith, hope, and charity, lived in response to God's love.

All Souls' Day, which follows on November 2, invites us to pray for the souls in purgatory. These souls are part of the communion as well, and the Church teaches that our prayers and sacrifices can help them in their purification process. These two feasts remind us that the Church is a living, breathing reality that spans time and space, and Mary, as the Mother of the Church, plays a pivotal role in this communion of grace.

Mary's Role as the Most Exalted of All Saints

In the Church's view, Mary occupies a unique and unparalleled position among the saints. As the first and greatest saint, she perfectly fulfilled God's will with her profound "fiat" — her acceptance at the Annunciation — launching humanity's salvation.

Her remarkable role is underscored by the dogma of her Assumption, celebrated on August 15, which asserts that she was taken body and soul into heaven at the end of her earthly life. This, along with the dogma of the Immaculate Conception on December 8, which

teaches that she was conceived without original sin, sets her apart from all other saints. The Church honors her not only as a saint but as the Mother of the Church, interceding for the faithful and having borne the Savior of the world.

Pope Paul VI, in his apostolic exhortation "*Marialis Cultus*," referred to Mary as "the first and greatest of the disciples." She is the ultimate model of sanctity, teaching us humility, faith, obedience, and love — crucial virtues for holiness. While all saints are revered, Mary's unique role elevates her above them, inspiring us to pursue holiness in our own lives.

Mary and the Saints: A Communion of Intercession and Example

Mary's extraordinary role as the most revered saint extends beyond her title; it reflects her active involvement in the Church. She connects the saints in heaven with the faithful on earth, offering powerful intercession for those who seek her help. As a loving mother, she genuinely cares for her children and advocates for them to Jesus, imploring His mercy and grace in their times of need.

Throughout history, countless saints have turned to Mary in their trials. St. Bernard of Clairvaux encapsulated this trust in his prayer, the Memorare, urging the faithful to approach her with confidence: "Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection...was left unaided." This assurance underscores her unwavering commitment to those who seek her intercession.

Moreover, Mary serves as a shining example for the saints. Her

virtues — purity, faith, obedience, and selfless service — have inspired many to pursue holiness. St. Francis of Assisi, for instance, saw her as the model of perfect discipleship, while St. Therese of Lisieux sought to embody her childlike faith and trust in God.

By following Mary's example, we can deepen our connection to her and strengthen our relationship with God.

Mary's Intercession and the Saints in Heaven

The saints in heaven are a part of the **heavenly Church**, and their intercession for the faithful is an essential aspect of the communion of saints. The saints are not distant figures but active participants in the ongoing life of the Church. Just as the saints intercede for the living, so too does Mary, who is regarded as the **Queen of All Saints**. She is the one who leads all the saints in their praise and worship of God, and she is the one who continually prays for those on earth.

In the liturgy of the Church, especially in the **Liturgy of the Hours**, Mary is often invoked alongside the saints, as one who continues to intercede for the Church. The Church teaches that **Mary's intercession is unique** because she is the mother of Christ, and her maternal care extends to all the members of the Body of Christ, both living and dead. The saints, too, share in this work of intercession, offering prayers on behalf of those who are still striving for holiness.

The Saints, Mary, and Our Journey to Sainthood

As Catholics celebrate **All**

Saints' Day and **All Souls' Day**, they are invited to reflect on their own journey toward sainthood. The saints are not distant or unattainable figures; they are models who show us that holiness is possible for all. Mary, the most exalted of the saints, stands as a beacon of hope for every Christian. Her role in the communion of saints enriches the life of the Church, offering us an example to follow and a mother to pray for us.

Mary's connection to the saints also reminds us that sainthood is a communal journey. While each saint is unique in their vocation and witness, they all share in the same communion of grace. Their lives are interwoven with the lives of the faithful, and their prayers continue to guide and strengthen the Church. The **Communion of Saints** is not just a theological concept but a living reality in the life of the Church.

Conclusion: A Communion of Love and Grace

Mary, the most exalted of saints, is the mother of the Communion of Saints. Through her example, intercession, and maternal care, she draws us closer to God and to each other. As we celebrate **All Saints' Day** and **All Souls' Day** in November, we are reminded of the beauty of the communion of saints, a community bound together by grace and love. Through Mary's intercession, we are united with the saints in heaven and those still in need of our prayers. May her example inspire us to live lives of holiness, humility, and love, so that one day we, too, may join the great cloud of witnesses in the communion of saints. □



O. PORI MECOI

MY VOCATION STORY

"I WANT TO REALISE THE DREAM OF JOHN LEE"

Says Don Omar Delassa, sdb

Please Introduce Yourself

Hello, I'm Don Omar Delasa, a Salesian of Don Bosco and a "summer missionary" from the small town of Castelfranco di Rogno in Bergamo, home to just 400 residents. In my close-knit parish community, I learned the core values of Christianity – values that, for someone from Bergamo, revolve around simplicity, hard work, and helping others. My grandmothers embodied this lesson, teaching me that true fulfillment comes from aiding those in need through quiet acts of charity.

How did your vocation come about?

After finishing high school, I took a decisive step and enrolled in the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery at the University of Brescia. These transformative years introduced me to remarkable individuals, including Fr. Silvio Galli, a Salesian whose cause for beatification is underway. His guidance opened my eyes to a calling beyond medicine. Through my involvement with Auxilium, the organization he founded to support those in poverty, I began to contemplate a life of religious consecration and eventually joined the Salesians of Don Bosco. This path led me to a novitiate in Pinerolo, studies at Nave and Crocetta, and fulfilling ministry as



a priest and catechist at the Professional Training Centre in Sesto San Giovanni for the past 11 years. Deep within, I have always aspired to be a missionary, particularly drawn to Africa.

How did you choose Tonj?

I did not choose Tonj; it was destiny that led me there. In 2006 I was offered an incredible opportunity to assist and temporarily replace a brother running a small health dispensary. Despite my fears and the concerns of my loved ones, I eagerly accepted this transformative missionary journey. Traveling to Tonj involved several stops: London, Nairobi, Rumbek, and a challenging 7-hour jeep ride on a rough road. Upon arriving in this newly independent country, I quickly realized that, despite language barriers, I was embarking on a unique experience. My journey was profoundly shaped

by two key figures: Monsignor Mazzolari, the Bishop of Rumbek, and Father John Lee Taesok, a compassionate Korean Salesian. Father John's un-wavering love for the poorest of the poor not only inspired me but also set an example of selfless service that I strive to emulate.

Do you consider yourself to be the heir of John Lee?

Reflecting on my connection to him, I realize I still have a long way to go to embody his spirit. Only those who knew him can appreciate the depth of his exceptional character. He was a remarkable man – a perfect Salesian and a well-rounded Christian. His talents were extraordinary: he played every musical instrument, was an attentive and skilled doctor, and inspired countless students as a dynamic teacher. His bond with lepers was profound; he couldn't imagine life without them, nor they without him. Even as illness took him from South Sudan at just 42, he did so with a smile, surrounded by those whose lives he touched. This was John Lee Taesok. Arriving in Tonj in 2001, he became a beacon of hope in a country ravaged by civil war, dedicating himself to the young, the poor, and the sick. His unwavering commitment inspires me to strive for a similar impact in my own life.

How does the foundation work?

We are a dedicated team of around 50 volunteers, many of whom have spent significant time in Tonj. In 2011, with the support of our volunteers, successful fundraising efforts, and the generosity of the Pesenti family, we built a facility that provides up to 50 beds



Fr. John Lee Te-Sok

and essential services, including obstetrics, pediatrics, and vaccinations.

We operate without government funding, relying instead on partnerships with organizations like Missioni Don Bosco and the generosity of many compassionate individuals. Our team of 20 doctors, nurses, and technicians, along with the devoted Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, ensure that the John Lee Memorial Hospital serves the community effectively. Join us in making a meaningful impact in the lives of those we support.

Over the years, we have not only built and operated the hospital but also made significant contributions to the community of Tonj. In partnership with the Salesians and local residents, we have implemented essential projects, such as providing clean drinking water through wells and a modern purification plant.

We also built housing for volunteers, accommodating up to sixty individuals eager to support the

community. Additionally, we digitized patient data and created a medical information archive. Our focus on training has empowered us to employ local staff from marginalized backgrounds, fostering hope and opportunity. Together, we are making a meaningful impact.

Who are your collaborators?

Young people are our most impactful collaborators. Every summer, I bring at least a dozen spirited individuals aged 16 to 25—students from the Vocational Training Centre in Sesto San Giovanni—to Tonj. Their enthusiasm, paired with the experience of long-standing volunteers, ensures vital maintenance and exceptional services for our facilities. In Italy, dedicated volunteers—doctors, midwives, and retired nurses—generate essential funds and invest their time in training local staff. Some elderly women even sew baby clothes and blankets, while others organize community dinners or contribute financially to our mission. We are fortunate to have such a diverse and passionate group working together. Together, we're making a real difference in the lives of those we serve. Join us in this essential cause!

And your dreams?

I am eager to move to Tonj permanently, but my immediate priority is to ensure the hospital in Italy remains operational. Here's my vision for the future: 1. *Expand the Facility*: Invest in advanced equipment and hire skilled staff for our analysis laboratory to improve patient care. 2. *Enhance Surgical Services*: Bring on another surgeon and an anaesthetist to



"There are doctors, midwives, retired nurses and others who decide to spend part of their time in Tonj alongside local staff to train them and encourage them."

fully utilize our operating theatre and meet community healthcare needs. 3. *Support Education*: Provide at least one scholarship annually for a Salesian high school student to attend the University of Juba, empowering future healthcare professionals. 4. *Implement Sustainable Energy*: Install a photovoltaic system to reduce costs and improve efficiency for the hospital. 5. *Housing for Staff*: Build accommodation for hospital employees and their families to provide stability and enhance our team's commitment. 6. *Mobile Health Services*: Launch a mobile clinic to reach underserved areas, ensuring everyone has access to healthcare.

Ultimately, I hope for peace in a country that has captured my heart. Together, we can transform the healthcare landscape in Tonj! □



IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

Ancient Rules

Some ancient "rules" for churchgoers:

Thou shalt not come to service late nor for the "amen" fail to wait.

When sounds the organ's sweet refrain, their noisy tongue thou must restrain.

But when the hymns are sounded out, thou shalt lift up thy voice and shout.

Unto thy neighbour thou shalt bend and if a stranger make a friend.

Shortage of Coins

What she meant to say we have no record of, but this is what she did say. The Sister paused outside the church waiting for her companion. The Lady approached and gave her a two-shilling piece, "Oh, you shouldn't give me this" said the Sister. "I'm sorry I haven't anything smaller," said the Lady.

Believe it or Not

A priest once remarked "When I look at the comfortably-dressed congregation, I say to myself: "Where are the poor?" But when I count the collection, I say: "Where are the rich?"

I'll Do the Same

Mother: "Johnny, I was hoping you would be unselfish enough to give your little sister the larger piece of toffee. Why, even that old hen will give all the nicest dainties to her little chicks and take only one once in a while for herself."

Johnny (after watching the old hen

for a while) "Well, mom, I'd do the same thing if it was worms."

You Have Been Warned

Some Italian nuns of a nursing order opened a hospital in England, and breaking out in newly acquired English, stated on their prospectus: "We harbour all kinds of diseases, and have no respect for religion."

Liturgical Fashion

Teacher had been explaining the meaning of the coming Sunday, Passion Sunday, when she noticed one of the class not paying attention.

"Jimmy, what Sunday are we talking about?" she asked.

"Fashion Sunday," came the confident reply.

Somewhat taken aback, teacher asked: "And why do we call it "Fashion Sunday?"

After a moment's pause Jimmy replied: "Because all the statues are dressed in purple."

Oh, Professor!

An absent-minded professor was spending an evening at a friend's house. When he was about to leave, it was raining heavily. The hostess offered him accommodation for the night, which he readily accepted.

Suddenly the professor disappeared, nobody knowing what had become of him, and the family was about to retire for the night when he walked in, drenched to the skin.

He had been home to fetch his pyjamas. □

THE DILEMMA

A shepherd was grazing his sheep when a passerby remarked,
"What a beautiful flock you have! May I ask you a question?"
"Certainly," replied the shepherd.
"How far do you think your sheep travel each day?"
"Which ones, the white ones or the black ones?"
"The white ones."
"Well, the white ones, travel about six kilometres a day."
"And the black ones?"
"Also, six kilometres."
"How much grass do you think they eat each day?"
"Which ones, the white ones or the black ones?"
"The white ones."
"Well, the white ones consume about two kilograms of grass
a day."
"And the black ones?"
"Also, two kilograms."
"How much wool do you think they produce in a year?"
"Which ones, the white ones or the black ones?"
"The white ones."
"I think the white ones yield about three kilograms of wool
per year at shearing time."
"And the black ones?"
"Also, three kilograms."
The passerby was perplexed.
"May I ask why you have the peculiar habit of dividing the
sheep into black and white whenever I ask you a question?"
The shepherd replied, "It's normal; the white ones are mine."
"Ah! And the black ones?"
"The black ones are mine too," the shepherd retorted.
"The human mind makes meaningless divisions where Love
sees the One."



First of all, they came to get the gypsies. And I was happy because they were stealing. Then they came for the Jews. And I kept quiet, because I disliked them. Then they came for the homosexuals, and I was relieved, because I disliked them. Then they came for the communists, and I didn't say anything, because I wasn't a communist. One day, they came for me, and there was no one left to protest. (Bertolt Brecht)

MARY WAS THERE

I was caught up at work by a client for an error which escalated to the extent that my name was sent to management. I prayed the Three Hail Marys and the management took care of it. Thanks to Jesus and Mother Mary for saving me from this issue.

Shirly and Bernard

POPE'S WORLDWIDE PRAYER NETWORK NOVEMBER 2025

For the prevention of suicide

Let us pray that those who are tempted to commit suicide might find the support, care and love they need in their community, and be open to the beauty of life.

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SIGN OF CONSOLATION

How do we, as Christians, genuinely assess the fate that awaits us? Often, we hold our beliefs half-heartedly, fearing the painful idea that everything will ultimately fade into nothingness. Yet, our faith in the resurrection and the immortality of the soul offers profound dignity and significance to human existence. The Church passionately defends all stages of life—the birth, the suffering, and the death—because each contributes to a divine purpose that lasts for eternity. This understanding elevates human dignity to extraordinary heights, making life both beautiful and meaningful. Our Lady's Assumption into heaven reminds us that we, too, can ascend, but only if we unite ourselves fully with Christ. Let us embrace this opportunity and affirm our faith in the hope that awaits us. (*Pope St. Paul VI, 1969*)

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