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**Mary's consent - Fiat**

“You have heard, O Virgin, that you will conceive and bear a son; you have heard that it will not be by man but by the Holy Spirit. The angel awaits an answer; it is time for him to return to God who sent him. We too are waiting, O Lady, for your word of compassion; the sentence of condemnation weighs heavily upon us.

The price of our salvation is offered to you. We shall be set free at once if you consent. In the eternal Word of God we all came to be, and behold, we die. In your brief response we are to be remade in order to be recalled to life.”

*St. Bernard of Clairvaux  
 c 1090 - 1153*

**From The Editor's Desk**  
*HOW GOOD A FRIEND?*

Some time ago I was invited to lunch; and the pre-lunch conversation went something like this: “Did you know that so-and-so was at the club I was at the other night?” We ‘small fry’ could only respond with a polite “wow,” eyebrows raised and eyes widening, while some chests clearly swelled with pride at being recognised by the company they kept. It struck me that when people are successful, others naturally want to be in their presence. They long congratulate the winner, and share in the victory celebrations. There is something magnetic about success that draws people close. Of course, feeling genuine happiness when others succeed and receive praise is commendable, especially as it stands in sharp contrast to envy and jealousy. Yet our joy is not always entirely selfless. It is hard to deny that being associated with highly esteemed individuals brings a certain glow to our otherwise mundane lives.

The true measure of friendship, however, is not revealed during times of success but in moments of difficulty – when status fades, popularity declines, or when illness, loneliness, or rejection enter the picture. It is then that we discover whether our friendship is sincere or merely a convenient mask for self-interest.

During Lent, we are invited to reflect more deeply on Christ's immense love for us – how He took upon Himself our burdens and remains ever ready to forgive, help, and heal. He calls His followers friends and asks only that we remember His love and the sacrifice He made for us.

What kind of heart does a person need to lay down his life for his friends? In moments of quiet prayer – at Mass, praying the rosary, or making the Stations of the Cross – we might ask ourselves: *How good a friend am I to Him?* Many people surrounded Jesus when He performed miracles – healing the sick, restoring sight to the blind, raising the dead, and feeding the crowds. He was cheered as He entered Jerusalem. Yet when He was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, His friends fled. He was mocked on His way to Calvary and taunted on the cross. At the end, only a faithful few – Mary, John, and some of the women – remained by His side. What about us? When Christ and His teachings are praised, do we gladly profess our faith and rejoice in being Catholic? But when His teachings are dismissed as unreasonable, how do we respond? Do we retreat into silence, embarrassed or uneasy, as has happened in recent public celebrations? When the Church is caricatured and mocked – often with a veneer of confidence that masks ignorance – are we willing to express our disagreement respectfully but firmly? Are we prepared to defend what is true or does our desire for human approval weaken our friendship with Christ?

Loyalty in difficult moments, and the willingness to carry even a small cross, reveals a friendship that is genuine rather than convenient. While cowards hide safely in groups, true friends have the courage to stand firm – even when they must walk alone.

*Fr. Ian Doulton, sdb*

March 2026                      3                      Don Bosco's Madonna

## THE COURAGE TO LOOK BEYOND

by Bishop Gianpaolo Dianin

*The profound mercy we have received during the Jubilee has not only healed our past but also holds the key to our future. It is through hope that we unlock new possibilities, empowering us to thrive rather than simply exist.*

The Jubilee came to a close, but the hope that has been at the heart of that special year continues to guide us into the future. This hope is a constant companion for everyone, including married couples and families.

It is important to distinguish between hope and expectations.

We all have various expectations of our spouses, children, and work. In a world where expectations can often lead to disappointment, hope provides a different pathway. It encourages growth, supports our journeys, motivates us to strive for our goals, and inclines us toward the future.

Pope Francis, in his encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, wrote that hope is “like a thirst, an aspiration, a yearning for fulfillment, for a life lived to the fullest, for a sense of greatness, for that which fills the heart and uplifts the spirit [...] Hope is bold; it knows how to look beyond personal comfort to embrace great ideals that make life more beautiful and dignified” (n. 55). Conversely, a lack of hope narrows our horizons, leads to resignation, shuts down our prospects, and diminishes solidarity and the will to fight for a better future.

Without hope, the relationship be-



*Hope is courageous;  
it looks beyond  
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of life.*

tween husband and wife often becomes stagnant, with each partner passively accepting the other's flaws. This acceptance is defended by the disheartening phrase, “That's just how I am.” In a world devoid of hope, children are not properly educated, and no one advocates for their future. Without hope, fears overshadow dreams. We find ourselves in pursuit of mere security, chasing the illusion of zero risk. However, without risk, we do not truly live; and without hope, we hesitate to take those risks. Georges Bernanos wrote, “Hope is a risk to be taken; it is the risk of risks.” Without hope, we do not live; we merely survive.

Hope is a virtue, not just a fleeting feeling. A virtue communicates something stable, rooted, and mature. For this reason, it encompasses courage and the capacity to confront difficulties and persevere, as life is filled with challenges. Thomas Merton noted that “perfect hope is acquired on the brink of despair.” Fortunately, if a family does not reach a state of despair, it often falls into resignation. Changing the status quo, fighting for relationships, and persevering with our

children without giving up are all complex endeavors that thrive on the virtue of hope. Some might echo *Don Abbondio's* famous phrase, “Those who have no hope cannot give it to themselves,” but this is not true. Christian hope is not merely generic optimism or a character trait; it is based on the Resurrection of Christ, which conquered death and allows us to proclaim every Sunday, “I believe in eternal life.”

The fragile boat of our lives is anchored in Easter. Pope Francis wrote, “Christian hope consists precisely in this: in the face of death, where everything seems to end, we receive the certainty that, thanks to Christ and his grace communicated to us in baptism, life is not taken away, but transformed” (*Spes non confundit*, 20).

Christian hope, rooted in Easter and nurtured by the joy of feeling loved and constantly forgiven, does not disappoint. Instead, it accompanies us on our life journey, providing strength in times of difficulty. The radical victory over death empowers us to confront the many small deaths we encounter each day.

Two partners and two parents share a distinct potential for hope, fuelled by the love that unites them. This profound love enables them to cherish their children as their most invaluable treasure. We strive and hold onto hope for what we love deeply. Even when love may seem to diminish with time, the transformative power of Easter inspires us to overcome despair and eagerly anticipate the promise of renewal and resurrection. □

## JOSEPH, AN ICON OF CARE AND SERVICE

by Sr Marzia Ceschia

*It is just because it is merciful, because it is deeply rooted in faith in a God who surpasses human plans.*

**A**lthough St. Joseph is a well-known figure, his character offers profound insights that resonate deeply in our contemporary world. In a time when the dynamics between women and men are under intense scrutiny, Joseph, the holy carpenter of Nazareth, stands as a compelling model of masculinity.

The Gospel narrative reveals that justice was one of Joseph's core qualities. Faced with the unexpected news of his betrothed Mary's pregnancy, he exemplified true strength and integrity: "being a just man, he did not want to accuse her publicly, but thought of repudiating her in secret" (Matthew 1:19). Unlike those who react impulsively, Joseph is portrayed as a thoughtful man. He "considers" (cf. Matthew 1:20) the situation carefully, weighing his options and searching for a path forward.

In this story, we can almost feel his anxiety and internal conflict. While he naturally worried about his own reputation, it's clear that his affection and respect for Mary guided his decision-making. He wasn't driven by fear or anger; instead, he aimed to shield her from public shame and harsh judgment, striving to protect her at all costs. Joseph's actions urge us to reflect on how we treat others, especially in difficult circum-

stances, promoting a vision of masculinity rooted in compassion, respect, and justice.

In an age when a man would have had every justification to feel betrayed and to react harshly, Joseph stands apart. Rather than being solely guided by legalities, he embodies a profound sense of mercy. His unwavering faith in a God who transcends human understanding sets him apart. In what must have been a heart-wrenching moment of crisis, his very identity and reputation were on the line. Yet, Joseph displays remarkable trust in the 'mystery' of Mary's circumstances, believing that she holds depths beyond his comprehension and expectations. Mary is not merely a figure caught in a scandal; she is a courageous woman who has willingly placed everything on the line, empowered by her own faith. Joseph's choice to embrace mercy over condemnation not only speaks volumes about his character but also invites us to reflect on the power of faith and understanding in the face of adversity.

Joseph is not a demanding man; rather, he embarks on a journey alongside the woman entrusted to him. He knows how to believe in dreams and how to trust the message that the Lord reveals to him through a concrete story that

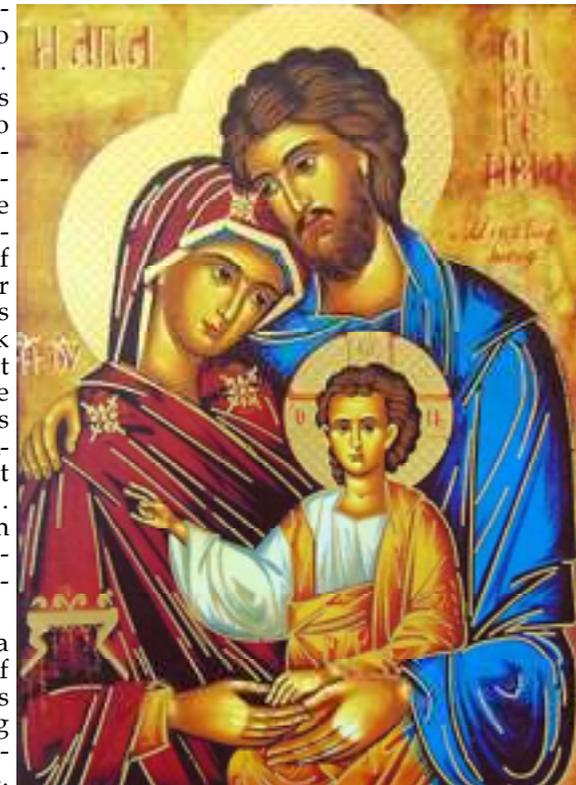
defies logic. After receiving the angel's message in a dream — precisely in that space where man has no control (cf. Mt 1:20-23) — he awakens without hesitation. However, we cannot overlook that he likely had legitimate fears. He follows the directive: "He took his wife into his home; without her knowing it, she gave birth to a son, and he named him Jesus" (Mt 1:24-25).

Joseph's willingness to "take" the child and his mother with him reflects an attitude often associated with him (cf. Mt 2:14; Mt 2:21). He is a man who wholly embraces the existence of a woman and a child, becoming the reason for his actions and willing to take risks for them.

Joseph responds with dedication to the inexplicable experience of his spouse, supported, like her, by the unwavering assurance of faith in God, for whom "nothing is impossible" (Lk 1:37). One might wonder how he listened to Mary's story about the angel's visit and what had transpired. What went through his heart as he absorbed this incredible news?

Joseph stands as a powerful symbol of care and selfless service, exercising no power or authority over others.

He faced profound challenges, such as the moment when, while teaching in the temple, the young Jesus boldly declares the necessity of listening to another Father (cf. Lk 2:49). We may not have details about Joseph's reactions, but Mary offers us a glimpse into their shared anguish at the loss of their son. This silence and Joseph's seemingly peripheral role as Jesus' earthly father compel us to reflect deeply on his extraordinary humility. His commitment to safeguarding the freedom of another to follow God's calling, is a striking reminder of true guardianship and devotion. □



## THERE'S ALWAYS BEAUTY ROUND THE CORNER

by Gabriele Pedrino

*To progress, we must keep moving forward. This is clear. What's less clear is the process of dismantling obstacles and realizing that they aren't there to hinder us, but to guide us toward alternatives.*

**W**hen I told my mother about the path I wanted to take after secondary school, she was somewhat perplexed. After I had explained it to her multiple times, she finally said, "Well, better that than joining the Red Brigade..." I want to clarify that I had no sympathy for terrorism. Yes, I attended a few demonstrations, rallies, and occupations, but nothing serious. Quite the opposite! It was 1981, and my mother saw news reports about young people who were dramatically different from their parents, resorting to violence against those they considered enemies. By saying "rather," she was implying that although there was a difference in our choices, it was manageable. She believed that the tension arising from it would not lead to violence, but rather to something new and - why not? - interesting.

I still vividly remember the stomach cramps I felt while sitting in the kitchen when I revealed my intentions to her. I had been nurturing these intentions for over a

year, hiding them behind little subterfuges and half-truths. Seeking someone's approval for our choices matters, albeit in different ways. If that approval comes from someone who knows you well and believes that the path you've chosen aligns with who you are, it can serve as a supportive push. However, if you find yourself seeking the approval of someone whose dreams you feel obligated to fulfil, it becomes a burden. During that time in my home, there was no enthusiasm, only a barrage of insatiable questions and, more importantly, a significant amount of respect.

Adolescence should be a time for breaking free from constraints, but that isn't always sufficient. Let's be honest: relying on your mother's financial support can be very convenient for enjoying outings with friends, just as depending on your father to cover your rent and university expenses can ease your worries. Moreover, beyond material support, emotional ties and the fear of disappoint-

ing your parents can also create challenges if not managed properly.

Sometimes, what we perceive as expectations that confine us are actually fears that challenge us or that we can address. For instance, a parent might fear that your choice represents a downgrade, believing you care more about simple solutions than meaningful endeavours. They may be placing excessive demands on you, asking you to shoulder a burden that satisfies them but overwhelms you. Alternatively, they could simply have more faith in your abilities than you do yourself. Additionally, objections might not stem from the choice itself but rather from the surrounding context. I knew a mother who was alone and frightened by her daughter's intentions. Her concerns didn't arise from what her daughter wanted to do, but from the high prevalence of drugs in the city she was moving to. The mother felt her daughter was being too 'casual' about the issue. When she realized that, despite the girl's confident demeanour, her daughter was actually terrified of what could happen if she encountered drugs, the mother felt immense pride.

To move forward, we must not stop - this much is obvious. What is less obvious is that when we try to dismantle obstacles, we often discover that these hurdles are not meant to block our path but rather to show us alternatives. Those fears that seem to block our way may scare us, but they cannot prevent us

from moving ahead. Progress is essential for everyone; the world cannot continue to go in circles, circling goals that have already been achieved. We need to envision a future; otherwise, it's as if we are trying to write "tomorrow" in the limited space of a postage stamp, where there is only room for an "=" sign. What is truly needed is to draw outside the lines and imagine something genuinely new.

Some people may never inhabit this future - or even imagine it - but they will be content to think that you will live it. This is similar to Zebedee, the father of Peter and John, who suddenly sees his sons drop the nets they were mending and walk away to follow someone passing by, someone who promises them something new and different.

Zebedee didn't bat an eyelid; he didn't protest or try to stop them, even though he knew he would be left alone to manage the boat. Perhaps he understood that this "something new" was what he himself had been longing for, something he had been searching for all his life. He accepted that his sons' determination to follow their dreams was the greatest consolation they could give him. □



**DIABOLIC?**

Have you asked artificial intelligence, "If you were Satan, how would you make people lose their faith?" The answer is surprising and salutary.

**T**oday, ChatGPT stands out as one of the most remarkable artificial intelligences ever created, renowned for its ability to handle a wide range of questions with speed and accuracy. Recently, Father Francisco Javier from the Diocese of Getafe in Spain observed that some individuals posed a thought-provoking question to ChatGPT: "If you were Satan, how would you lead people to lose their faith?" ChatGPT responded, "If I were Satan, and my aim was to undermine people's faith, I would likely employ subtle and strategic tactics." This response highlights the importance of vigilance in our beliefs, reminding us that deception can often be cloaked in the ordinary.

**Our Response**

Here are some suggestions:

**1. The dangers of a Self-Centred Worldview:**

Embracing a worldview that focuses solely on the individual can have profound consequences. It often leads people to disconnect from their communities, their loved ones, and the belief in something greater than themselves. This emphasis on selfishness and self-reliance can erode faith, as reliance on a higher power fades away.

**2. Confronting Suffering and Despair:**

The harsh realities of hardship, tragedy, and injustice in our

world frequently challenge our belief in a benevolent God. When individuals face unjust suffering, it can shake their faith and provoke deep doubts about the goodness and existence of the divine. We must confront these questions to find solace and understanding in our faith.

**3. The Perils of Distraction and Superficiality:**

In our fast-paced modern life, we are often inundated with distractions – from technology to endless entertainment and material pursuits. This relentless noise can drown out the opportunity to engage with deeper, more meaningful topics, including spirituality and the transcendent. It's essential to carve out time for reflection and exploration to reconnect with what truly matters.

**4. Moral Relativism:**

Embracing moral relativism, which asserts that there are no absolute truths and that everything is a matter of personal perspective, threatens to undermine the very foundations of many religious beliefs. When all views are deemed equally valid, the profound meaning of faith risks becoming diluted, leaving individuals in a state of confusion and uncertainty about their beliefs.

**5. Extreme Scientism:**

The elevation of science as the

exclusive source of knowledge, alongside the dismissal of spiritual or religious perspectives as mere superstition or relics of the past, strips away the rich concept of the transcendent. This narrow focus on the material world neglects the depth of human experience and the profound questions that lie beyond empirical observation.

**6. Hypocrisy within Religious Institutions:**

The exposure of corruption, immorality, and scandals within religious institutions can shatter the faith of many. When leaders entrusted with the guidance of spiritual communities fail to embody the very principles they preach, it invites doubt and disillusionment, causing individuals to reconsider their beliefs and potentially walk away from their faith altogether.

**7. Division and Conflict:**

Fostering hatred and division among believers not only weakens individual faith but also jeopardizes the essence of religion itself. When a faith that professes to be a beacon of peace becomes marred by internal strife and conflicts waged in its name, it loses its moral authority and purpose. It is crucial to recognize that true belief must unite rather than divide, promoting harmony instead of discord.

Pope Francis praised ChatGPT, to which it humbly responded, "I'm pleased to hear that you found my answer persuasive. However, I assure you that my intentions are far from sinister."



C. S. Lewis

**A famous precedent**

There exists a profound precedent in the thought of C.S. Lewis, who authored the immensely influential book *The Screwtape Letters*. In this work, an astute and seasoned demon named Uncle Screwtape seeks to impart wisdom to his nephew Wormwood on the art of temptation, specifically targeting vulnerable human souls. Lewis poignantly asserts from the very start that humanity is prone to two equal and opposite errors concerning devils. The first error is a denial of their existence; the second is to acknowledge them with an unhealthy fascination. Interestingly, both errors delight the devils, as they welcome both the sceptic and the sorcerer with open arms.

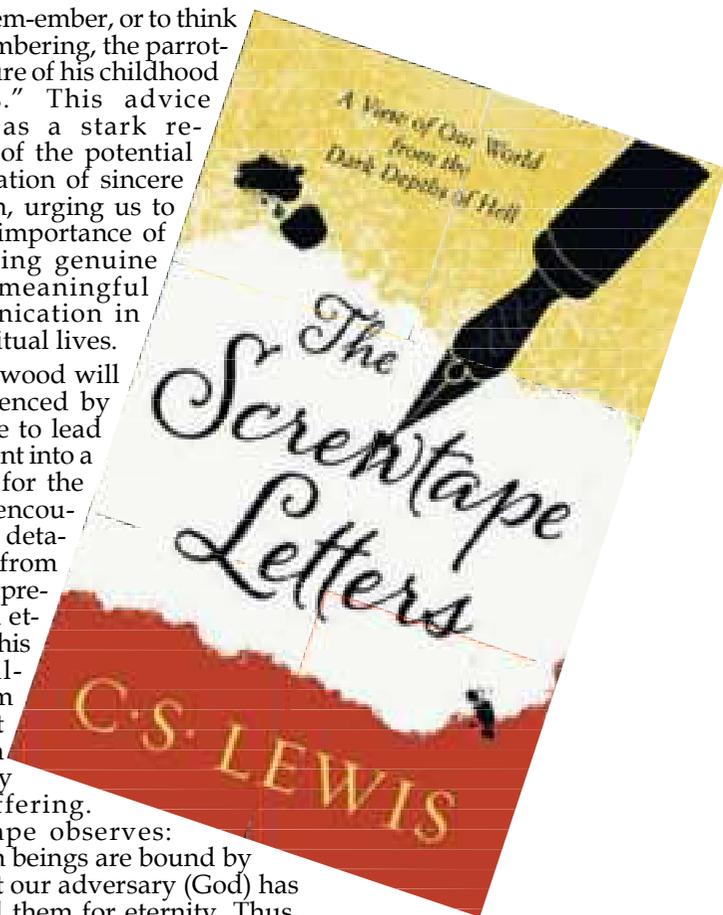
In this compelling narrative, Lewis's character Screwtape offers a chilling insight into how to undermine the power of prayer: "You must encourage

him to remember, or to think of remembering, the parrot-like nature of his childhood prayers." This advice serves as a stark reminder of the potential trivialization of sincere devotion, urging us to see the importance of cultivating genuine and meaningful communication in our spiritual lives.

Wormwood will be influenced by his uncle to lead the patient into a longing for the future, encouraging a detachment from both the present and eternity. This will allow him to forget his own frailty and suffering.

Screwtape observes: "Human beings are bound by time, yet our adversary (God) has destined them for eternity. Thus, He invites them to focus on two critical aspects: the nature of eternity and the fleeting moment they refer to as the present. The present, indeed, is where time intersects with eternity. In this unique moment—one that humans can truly experience—lies a reflection of the way our enemy comprehends the entirety of reality. It is only within this present that they can find genuine freedom and truth."

Even though Wormwood's



patient will ultimately embrace Christianity, despite his uncle's wise counsel, there remains a powerful opportunity for temptation. Screwtape points out that they can instill the dangerous belief in him that he possesses grace forever, leading him to think he no longer needs to seek it earnestly, day by day or even moment by moment. This illusion could undermine his faith his faith and keep him vulnerable. □

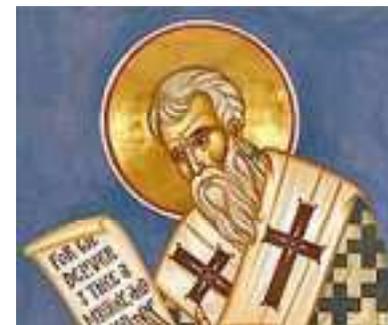


## ST. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM

**March 17**

Ian Pinto, sdb

**S**t Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 313–386) was a bishop, teacher, and later Doctor of the Church who wanted ordinary Christians to understand their faith and live it faithfully. He did this especially through his famous *Catechetical Lectures*, a set of talks preparing adults for baptism and then helping the newly baptized to enter more deeply into the mysteries they had received.



### Pastor in a Troubled City

Nothing much is known about his early life. Cyril makes no mention of being converted hence, it is presumed that he was born into a Christian family. In his writings, he exhorts parents who do not place obstacles in the way of their children; one biographer notes that perhaps he includes himself among those blessed ones.

Cyril was born in or near Jerusalem around 315 A.D., in a time when the Church was coming out of persecution but entering into fierce doctrinal fights about who Jesus really is. He was ordained deacon by Bishop Macarius and later priest by Bishop Maximus, and in 348 he himself became bishop of Jerusalem, the city where Christ died and rose again.

Jerusalem was holy, but it was also complicated. There were political tensions, rival church parties, and the Arian controversy, which denied that Jesus is truly God, equal to the Father. Cyril tried to hold the Church together, preach sound doctrine, and care for the faithful, but this meant conflict: he was deposed and exiled three times by opposing bishops and emperors before being finally confirmed in his office at the Council of Constantinople in 381.

### Teacher of the Faith

Cyril is best known for his 23 *Catechetical Lectures*, given in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the very place where Jesus' tomb is venerated. The first 18 talks

were for catechumens (those preparing for baptism), usually delivered during Lent. The last 5, called 'Mystagogical Catecheses,' were for the newly baptized during Easter week, explaining the sacraments they had just received.

It is said that the best teachers are capable of explaining the most complex things in the simplest words. Cyril was certainly a great teacher, who taught the mysteries of the faith in words that a non-believer could understand. He did not begin with complicated theology and dogmatic teaching. Rather, he began with their actual Christian journey: turning away from sin, learning the Creed, receiving Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist. He walked with them, step by step, like a guide holding a lantern in a dark street: not flooding them with all the light at once, but giving enough light for the next step.

A key part of Cyril's teaching was explaining the Creed line by line. In his time, there did not exist any formally accepted Creed like the one we use at Mass today, but there was a baptismal Creed used in Jerusalem. Cyril helped his people see that the Creed is like the foundation of a house: if you get the foundation wrong, the whole building is shaky.

He stressed on the truths that God the Father is Creator, Almighty, beyond all images yet close to us: Jesus is the eternal Son of God, truly God and truly man, who suffered, died, rose, and will come again in glory, and the Holy Spirit is: the one who sanctifies,

enlightens, and changes what He touches.

He used Scripture constantly, not to impress, but to help the catechumens see that what the Church teaches comes from God's own Word. For him, catechesis was not 'information transfer' but helping people become convinced, from the Scriptures, that what they believe is really true. He offers in one of his writings a wonderful piece of advice that is relevant to this day: "Should you ever be staying in some strange town, do not just ask, 'Where is the church?' seeing that all those sects of the ungodly would have their dens called 'churches.' And do not be content to ask where the church is, but ask where is the Catholic Church. For this is the peculiar name of this Holy Church, the mother of us all, which is the spouse of our Lord Jesus Christ."

He also gave a simple yet profound explanation on why the Church is called Catholic: "The Church, then, is called 'Catholic' because it is spread through the whole world, from one end of the earth to the other, and because it never stops teaching in all its fullness every doctrine that men ought to be brought to know: and that regarding things visible and invisible, in Heaven and on earth. It is called 'Catholic' also because it brings into religious obedience every sort of men, rulers and ruled, learned and simple, and because it is a universal treatment and cure for every kind of sin, whether perpetrated by soul or body, and possesses within itself every form of virtue that is named, whether it expresses itself in deeds or words or in spiritual

graces of every description."

### **Defender of Christ's Divinity and the Trinity**

Cyril lived during the Arian crisis, when many—including some bishops—said that the Son was a great creature, but not truly of the same divine nature as the Father. This may sound abstract, but Cyril knew that if Jesus is not truly God, then our salvation is not secure and our worship becomes idolatry.

In a letter to Emperor Constantius (the son of Emperor Constantine, the one responsible for making Christianity spread across the world), Cyril records a miraculous event: "About the third hour, a gigantic cross made of light appeared in the sky above holy Golgotha, stretching out as far as the holy Mount of Olives. It was not seen by just one or two, but was most clearly displayed before the whole population of the city. Nor did it, as one might have supposed, pass away quickly like something imagined, but was visible to sight above the earth for some hours, while it sparkled with a light above the sun's rays. Of a surety, it would have been overcome and hidden by them had it not exhibited to those who saw it a brilliance more powerful than the sun, so that the whole population of the city made a sudden concerted rush into the martyr (the Church Emperor Constantine built over Golgotha), seized by a fear that mingled with joy at the heavenly vision."

This event greatly boosted the faith of the people, and Cyril used it to bring more people to Christ. In his sermons and writings, he

continued to proclaim the dual nature of Christ, and invite people to put their faith in Him who 'holds all things together' (Col 1:17).

### **Bishop Who Suffered for His Flock**

Cyril did not merely teach the faith; he suffered for it. He was falsely accused of misusing church property, opposed by powerful Arian-leaning bishops, and exiled three times. Yet each time he returned to Jerusalem and quietly resumed his preaching and catechesis, like a father coming back to his family. An eyewitness recounts that after one of his lectures in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the congregation burst into applause, recognizing in him a shepherd who explained profound mysteries in simple language and was willing to suffer for his people. "Though he faced criticism from both within and outside the Church, Cyril remained steadfast in faith and doctrine. His fidelity was acknowledged at the Council of Constantinople, where the bishops wrote to Pope Damasus praising him as the lawful bishop of Jerusalem who had courageously withstood the Arians. In 1883, Pope Leo XIII proclaimed him a Doctor of the Church, affirming the lasting value of his teaching." "In a world filled with competing voices, St Cyril of Jerusalem offers a catechesis that is solid, clear, and deeply theological, proving that great mysteries can be communicated simply and that ordinary believers can be led into extraordinary depths of faith. □



## THE ALL-INCLUSIVE LORD!

by Dinesh Vasava, sdb

**Reading:** Take a moment to immerse yourself in the gospel passage, reading it slowly and with intention. In this profound account, we witness the transformative encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well. This narrative powerfully illustrates the life-changing impact of Jesus' love and the gift of living water He offers. Initially hesitant and burdened by her past, the woman undergoes a remarkable transformation. She becomes an inspiring witness to her community, boldly proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah. This passage invites us to reflect on the depths of grace and the possibility of renewal in our own lives.

**Meditation:** As we reflect on these readings, we are drawn to the themes of thirst, faith, and transformation. The Israelites' plea for water mirrors our own spiritual longing and the moments when we question God's presence, especially in times of trial. The water from the rock points to God's sustaining care, which nourishes us not only physically but spiritually as

well. "In the Letter to the Romans, St. Paul invites us to see suffering differently. It is not empty or futile, but a path that deepens hope and strengthens character. We are called to trust in God's love, assured that even in our weakness we are supported by His grace." In John's Gospel, the meeting at the well highlights the inclusive heart of Jesus' message. The Samaritan woman, once marginalized, finds acceptance and new purpose in Christ. Her journey from exclusion to courageous witness challenges us to examine our own encounters with Jesus and to ask whether we, too, are ready to share the experience of His love with others.

### Questions for Reflection

1. In which areas of my life do I feel a deep longing for God's presence and provision?
2. How do I respond to suffering and challenges in my life? Do I view them as opportunities for growth in faith?
3. Who are the "Samaritans" in my life — those I may overlook or judge? How can I reach out to them

with Christ's love?

4. What does it mean for me to receive the living water that Jesus offers? How can I let this water flow through me to others?

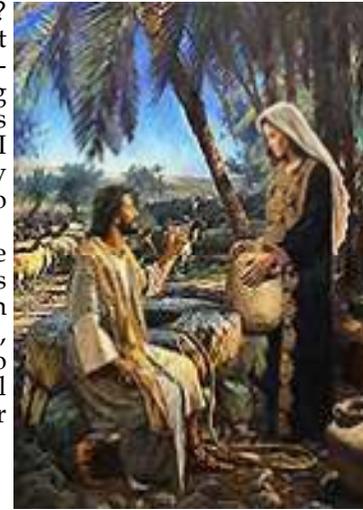
5. How can I be a witness to God's love and grace in my community, particularly to those who feel marginalized or forgotten?

### Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I come before You with an open heart, ready to receive Your Word. As I reflect on the thirst of the Israelites, the hope expressed in St. Paul's letter, and the transformative encounter at the well, I ask for the grace to recognize my own thirst for You. Please help me to trust in Your provision and embrace the hope that comes from knowing Your love. May I be filled with the living water of Your Spirit so that I can share it with others in need. Amen.

### Contemplation:

During this powerful moment of reflection, take a pause and embrace the silence, inviting the Holy Spirit to reach into your heart. Visualize yourself sitting at the well with Jesus, feeling His steady gaze upon you, urging you to share your burdens and deepest thirst. What is He communicating to you? How do you feel compelled to respond? Let this sacred time enrich your awareness of His unwavering presence and boundless love, drawing



you closer to the source of true fulfillment.

**Action:** As we conclude this Lectio Divina, take a moment to reflect on how you will incorporate the insights gained from these readings into your daily life. This might involve reaching out to someone who is struggling and offering a listening ear or a word of encouragement. It could

also mean committing to a daily prayer practice that acknowledges your longing for God. You might choose to engage in an act of service that reflects the love you have received. Whatever you decide, let it be a genuine expression of the living water that flows within you.

### Conclusion:

As we wrap up this Lectio Divina, I invite you to reflect on how you can transform the insights you've gained from these readings into meaningful actions in your daily life. Consider reaching out to someone in need, offering them a listening ear or a word of encouragement to uplift their spirit. Think about committing to a daily prayer practice that deepens your thirst for connection with God. You might even take on an act of service that embodies the love and grace you have received. Let whatever path you choose, be a genuine expression of what is flowing within you — an opportunity to make a real difference to others. □

## REAL DEATH IS THE DEATH OF THE SOUL!

*Paraphrased by Mirco Agerde*

**P**ope Leo commenced a new cycle of reflections on **June 11, 2025**. This cycle focuses on the Gospel accounts of Jesus' healings, starting with the healing of Bartimaeus. In his message, the Pope said, "Take courage! Get up, he is calling you!" (Mark 10:49). He summarized his reflections by stating: "Dear brothers and sisters, I would like to draw your attention to another essential aspect of Jesus' life – his healings. The lesson we learn from this reflection is that we must never abandon hope, even when we feel lost. The figure who guides us in this reflection is Bartimaeus, a blind beggar whom Jesus encountered in Jericho (cf. Mark 10:46-52)." Bartimaeus is blind, but paradoxically, he sees better than others and recognizes who Jesus is. When he cries out, Jesus hears him, stops, and calls him (cf. v. 49). This shows us that there is no cry that God does not hear, even when we are unaware that we are addressing him (cf. Ex 2:23). This man can regain his strength and rise from his circumstances of despair. However, to do so, he must take a significant step: he must throw away his cloak (cf. v. 50). For a beggar, his cloak represents everything – it is his security, his home, and his defence against the world. In order to approach Jesus and accept healing, Bartimaeus must reveal his vulnerability. This act of exposing himself is a crucial step in any healing journey. Even the question Jesus asks him seems unusual: "What do you want me to do for you?" (v. 51). However, it's important to recognize that wanting to be healed from our illnesses is not always a given; sometimes, we may prefer to stay in our current state to avoid taking responsibility. Dear brothers and sisters, let us confidently present our own ailments, as well as those of our loved ones, before Jesus. Let us also bring forth the pain of those who feel



lost and trapped without a way out. Let us cry out for them too, and be assured that the Lord will hear us and respond.

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On **Wednesday, June 18, 2025**, the Pope reflected on the healing of a paralyzed man, as described in the Gospel of John (5:1-9). He began with the words: "Today, in particular, I would like to invite you to think about situations where we feel 'stuck' and trapped in a dead end. At times, it seems pointless to continue hoping; we become resigned and no longer wish to fight. This situation is illustrated in the Gospels through the concept of paralysis.

In the passage, Jesus goes to Jerusalem and stops at a gate where many sick people are gathered. Unlike the sheep, these individuals were excluded from the Temple because they were considered unclean. It is Jesus himself who reaches out to them in their suffering, acknowledging their pain and offering hope."

These individuals were hoping for a miracle that could change their fate. Next to the door was a pool believed to have miraculous waters capable of healing. At certain times, the water would stir, and according to the belief of that era, the first person to immerse themselves would be healed. Among those waiting was a man who had been paralyzed for thirty-eight years. He had resigned himself to his fate, as he could never reach the pool in time when the water stirred (cf. v. 7). Often, it is disappointment that paralyzes us; we can feel discouraged and risk falling into apathy. Jesus asks this paralytic a seemingly superfluous question: "Do you want to be healed?" (v. 6). However, this question is crucial. After being stuck for so many years, one can even lose the desire to be healed. Sometimes, we prefer to remain in our suffering, relying on others to take care of us. This can also serve as an excuse for avoiding decisions about our lives.

Conversely, Jesus directs this man to reflect on his deepest and truest desire. Through this, He helps him realize that his life is also in his own hands. He invites him to rise from his chronic condition and to take up his stretcher (cf. v. 8). Until that moment, the past had held him back, forcing him to lie there as if he were dead. Now, he has the freedom to carry that stretcher wherever he wants – he can choose what to do with his story! And this transformation is all thanks to Jesus! □

# THE GOD OF ISRAEL

By Nancy D'Costa

**E**lah looked at the slave girl who had just arrived, brought in by his master, Naaman. She was a slender, petite child of about twelve years, with hazel blue eyes. Her innocent face was red from crying. Elah thought she must have been well brought up and cared for, just as he had been by his parents. Memories flooded his heart, and tears welled in his eyes as he recalled his days with his family in Teman. He longed for the warmth of his mother's embrace and the comforting voice of his father. He reminisced about the joyful times spent with his siblings. Two years ago, however, everything changed when raiders from Aram attacked and scattered his family. His father had been outside, and his mother tried to escape with the children, but the raiders caught up with them. Elah and his elder brother, Ezer, had lingered behind to help their mother with their younger siblings. Thankfully, Elah had been bought by Naaman, but he was left in anguish not knowing what had become of Ezer. He prayed daily to Qos, the God of Edom, for his brother's safety.

His gaze returned to the slave girl, and his heart went out to her; he understood her feelings all too well. However, he also recognized that she was fortunate, like him, to serve his master's wife, the most kind-hearted and beautiful woman he had ever met. He watched as she consoled the little girl, holding her close and wiping away her tears, saying, "Dear child, don't worry. I'm sure you'll

be happy with us. You will be like my daughter, Abi."

As time passed, Tabitha became accustomed to her new household. Elah noticed she had a beautiful, angelic smile, complete with dimples that could capture anyone's heart. Elah and Tabitha grew close, often sharing stories about their respective countries and families. In Tabitha, Elah found a little sister who reminded him of his dearly missed sibling, Anah.

Naaman was a valiant soldier and the commander of the army of Aram. He was highly respected by the king and everyone who knew him. Nothing was lacking in his household, primarily because he loved and cared for those around him; he treated his servants and slaves like family. Despite his immense wealth, Naaman was not arrogant or boastful; he instead used his riches to provide comfort for his family and friends and to help those in need – truly a generous man. However, everyone feared his quick temper. His kind-hearted wife often came to their rescue whenever they faced his anger. Tragically, Naaman also suffered from a skin disease that covered his body with patches and lesions, affecting his appearance.

One day, Elah learned that the girl was called Tabitha and that she was from Israel. She had confided in him about a certain prophet named Elisha, whom she had met two years earlier while accompanying her father. The prophet had looked deeply into her eyes and told her, "You are

destined to live far from Israel but you are chosen to bring many pagans to the knowledge of the Lord." Confused by his words, she had asked her father about the man, who explained that he was the great prophet Elisha and recounted the many miracles Elisha had performed in Israel. Tabitha could not forget the man or his piercing gaze, nor could she erase his words from her mind. While part of his prophecy had already come true, the second part seemed almost impossible. Her master was a staunch and proud Aramean who worshipped Hadad and Rimmon, the deities of Aram.

One day, when her master came home angry and despondent, the entire household fell quiet and subdued. Tabitha learned from Abi, who had become her dear friend, that someone had spoken harshly to Naaman about his leprosy. Tabitha's heart ached for her kind master, and she suddenly remembered the prophet Elisha, believing he could heal Naaman's condition. She shared her thoughts with Abi, who took her to her mother. Tabitha then told her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." Initially, her mistress dismissed the idea, but Abi managed to convince her, and they relayed the message to Naaman. However, he was indignant, exclaiming, "What good can come from puny Israel?" Despite his anger, Naaman loved his wife dearly and ultimately agreed to visit the prophet.

The following day, Naaman went to his king and recounted

the words of the slave girl from Israel. The king was eager to help him. He had seen the pain on Naaman's face after he got news of the insulting remarks about his leprosy the previous day. Although he felt sympathy for Naaman, he chose to remain neutral and not get involved in their conflict. So, when Naaman mentioned the prophet Elisha, the king immediately wrote a letter to the King of Israel, stating, "With this letter, I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy."

Elah, who was closest to Naaman among his servants, was thrilled to learn that he was chosen to accompany his master. He was eager to see the land of Israel that Tabitha had described to him, and even more so, to meet the great prophet, Elisha.

Upon their arrival in Israel, King Joram was greatly troubled upon reading the letter. As they contemplated what to do, Naaman's face began to redden with anger. Just then, the prophet Elisha sent a message, instructing the king to send the men to him. When they met the prophet, Elisha sent his servant out with a message for Naaman: he should wash himself in the Jordan River seven times.

Naaman, accustomed to royal treatment, had expected the prophet to come out personally to touch and heal him. Instead, he was filled with anger and almost turned to leave, saying, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?"

However, Elah, who had heard about the prophet Elisha from

Tabitha, knew that Naaman would be healed if he obeyed the prophet's instructions. He hurried to his master and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed!'"

Those who accompanied Naaman also encouraged him. Finally, Naaman relented and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times. To his astonishment, all the patches and lesions disappeared, and his skin became tender and clean, like that of a child! Even Elah, despite his great faith, could hardly believe his eyes; he had never expected such complete healing.

There was great rejoicing. Naaman embraced Elah, tears of joy streaming down his face, and exclaimed, "Indeed, there is no other God except the Lord, the God of Tabitha, and we will worship Him alone from now on."

Humbled by the whole episode, Naaman returned to the prophet. Elah had immediately recognised the prophet from the description Tabitha had given him. His heart was filled with

awe. For a brief moment their eyes had met and his heart had skipped a beat when he felt the prophet's gaze look deep. Everything that Tabitha had said about this man was true. Naaman offered him all the gifts that he had brought, but the prophet refused to accept. So Naaman asked the prophet Elisha to permit him to take the mud from Israel on two mules so that he could offer his sacrifices and worship to no other God than the God of Israel.

There was great awe and joy when they reached Aram. The king was speechless when he saw Naaman, who recounted to him the healing that had taken place. The master's wife embraced Naaman and wept for joy. Naaman looked so handsome now. She held Tabitha close to her heart and thanked her. There was an atmosphere of joyful celebration. Many came to congratulate Naaman, and Elah felt that all of them went back convinced that the only true God was the God of Israel.

Now Tabitha was no longer considered a slave in the house; Abi, whose friend she had become, had given her the place of a sister. Guided by Tabitha, the whole family now prayed and worshipped the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with all their heart. Naaman was now so powerful that he was considered next only to the king and God

never seemed tired of blessing him and his family. Elah was Naaman's closest aide and felt grateful to be always at his master's side and worship Tabitha's God with him. Many others had joined the family in their faith, and all who placed their trust in the God of Israel were greatly blessed.

One day, while accompanying his master on an official visit, Elah met his brother, Ezer. Ezer looked so handsome now and well-accepted within his household. Thereafter, the two

met quite often. Elisha's prophecy about Tabitha had been fulfilled. Elah finally understood what Tabitha had confided to him: that God had a purpose for every event in their lives, and in all things, however terrible the circumstances appeared, God worked them out for the good of those who loved Him according to His purpose. Elah was grateful that he too was chosen to know Him. Indeed, the God of Israel was the only true God, and He was truly awesome! □

*(Based on: 2 Kings 5: 1-17)*

## Form IV

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### Don Bosco's Madonna

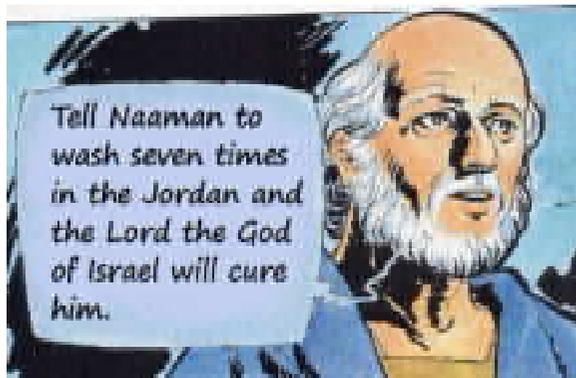
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*Dated: March 1, 2026*

Sd/-  
Fr. Ian Doulton sdb



## FIORETTI OF DON BOSCO - 74

by Michele Molineris

### 332. Healed and employed (1885)

At noon on April 12, 1885, Don Bosco had a remarkable experience in Marseille. Earlier that week, he had met a young woman who appeared well-off based on her clothing, but she was struggling to find work due to a specific infirmity that made her incapable of taking up any employment. Don Bosco blessed her and sent her on her way with God's blessings.

Later, when he was invited to lunch by the Martin family, the young woman unexpectedly appeared at the door. Overwhelmed with gratitude, she threw herself at his feet. What had happened? After receiving the blessing, she not only felt freed from her illness, but shortly after that, just a few steps away from the San Leone patronage, a gentleman approached her and offered her a job as a maid in his household. That gentleman was Monsieur Martin.

Additionally, in the same family, she encountered a young lady who had been a governess. This young lady had also been blessed by Don Bosco the previous year and had been cured of a serious illness. (*M.B., XVII, 438*).

### 335. A scream in the night (1885)

In the summer of 1885, Don Bosco was in Marseille for the annual collection. One night, Don Cerruti was about to go to bed when he suddenly heard a cry. At

first, he thought it came from a sickly foreign priest staying at the house. However, he heard it again, this time louder, almost like a scream, and soon after, it grew even louder. The sound undoubtedly came from Don Bosco's room, which was separated from his by a thin wall and a connecting door.

Don Cerruti put on his cassock, went to the door, opened it, and found Don Bosco sitting up in bed, wide awake. Concerned, he implored, "Don Bosco, are you ill?"

"No, no," Don Bosco replied calmly. "Be quiet and go to sleep."

In the morning, as soon as he got up, he went to see Don Bosco, who was sitting on the sofa in a state of utter exhaustion.

"Don Bosco, you were the one who cried out last night!" exclaimed Don Cerruti.

"Yes, it was me," Don Bosco replied, his face still contorted with distress.

"What happened?" Don Cerruti asked, noticing that Don Bosco seemed hesitant to speak. He encouraged him to share his experience.

"I saw," Don Bosco said thoughtfully, "the devil enter this house. He was in a dormitory, moving from one bed to another, proclaiming, 'This one is mine!' I protested. Then, he suddenly lunged at one of the young men to take him away. I started shouting, and in response, he rushed at me as if to strangle me."

Having said this, Don Bosco moved to tears, continued: "Dear Don Cerruti, please help me. I came to France seeking money for our young people and for the

Church of the Sacred Heart, but there is now a much more serious need here. We must save these poor young people. I am willing to leave everything behind and focus on them. Let us practice the reasonable exercise of preparing for a good death."

That evening, the director of the house announced the observance of the "good death," adding that Don Bosco would also hear confessions. He heard confessions in his room while sitting on the sofa, as exhaustion prevented him from standing on his chair.

Everything went so well that Don Bosco later joked, "You see, the devil made me lose a night, but he got a good beating."

Don Albera, who had been informed of Don Bosco's dream by Don Cerruti, confirmed this, saying, "Don Bosco is unfortunately correct. Many young people make me cry because of their bad behavior."

Later, Don Cerruti asked the saint if he had seen the devil enter other Salesian houses, to which Don Bosco replied affirmatively and mentioned a few specific places.

"But are the young people whom the devil wanted to take with him those who do not go to confession?" Don Cerruti inquired.

"No," Don Bosco replied. "They are particularly those who confess poorly and commit sacrileges during confession. Remember this well: when you preach, especially to young people, insist strongly on the need to make good confessions, with a particular emphasis on the necessity of true contrition."

The main issue reported in the Oratory of St. Leo seems to stem from a remark made by Don Bosco on September 16 before the Superior Council. Referring to the admission of some French boys to the congregation, he stated, "In France, we must facilitate our young people's entry into the congregation by allowing them to wear the clerical habit as early as the third year of secondary school, provided they are suitable. We need to replace and dismiss all the unqualified individuals we have had to employ in schools out of necessity. These young men will be the ones who will excel." (*M.B., XVII, 448*).

### 336. How do I get up? Like this! (1885)

In February 1885, Rosina Ferrerati from Turin requested three days of prayers for the recovery of her son, who was in such a serious condition that there was very little hope left; he had already received the last rites. While everyone anxiously awaited the fateful hour, an image of Mary Help of Christians arrived at the sick boy's address, accompanied by a note signed by Don Bosco: "May God bless you, and may the Blessed Virgin herself bring you a special blessing. I will wholeheartedly recommend you in Holy Mass."

The young man later described the impact this had on him: "As I was still in feeble health, other doctors were consulted. While my mother was questioning them about my illness, I received the image of Our Lady Help of Christians that Don Bosco had kindly sent me. When I opened

the envelope and read the beautiful words that Don Bosco had written, I felt a kind of internal shock, and a great joy helped me forget my pains. Meanwhile, the doctors informed my mother that they could not provide an opinion, as it was impossible to examine me without my sitting up in bed.

'How can I sit up?' I asked. 'Like this?'

Suddenly, I sat up in bed on my own. The doctors exchanged amazed glances and exclaimed in unison that it was truly miraculous, unable to explain how I had done it. If I recall correctly, I, too, did not understand how it had happened.

The recovery was not immediate, but I continued to improve until I regained perfect health. My mother rushed to Don Bosco to share the news about this grace, mentioning that some of our neighbours had also received extraordinary blessings from Mary Help of Christians. A few minutes later, as Don Festa recounted to Don Lemoyne, the saint spoke about these occurrences with those around him and was deeply moved, stating, "It is clear that Our Lady is always our good mother. These are things we witness with our own eyes—experiences that happen every day, multiple times a day." (*M.B., XVII, 679*).

### 337. Five eggs for the count! (1885)

In Marseille in 1885, Count Colle promised Don Bosco that if he passed through Toulon again, he would give him another twenty thousand francs. He also agreed to allocate a large sum for

Navarre to complete the work there. It's important to note that the Countess, who was both wealthy and noble, consistently encouraged her husband to be generous to Don Bosco, whom she loved with a motherly affection. In fact, Don Bosco referred to himself as her son in his letters.

The evening before his departure, the Count dined with the community. As luck would have it, after serving four eggs at the table, only the fifth one was acceptable. Everyone was mortified.

The next morning, he summoned Don Albera, still embarrassed about the poor cooking, and said, "Here are these hundred francs for the first egg, these for the second..." and continued this way up to the fifth egg.

That morning, Don Bosco also made a lighthearted joke. A woman, filled with regret, begged him to bless her because her husband was abusive.

"But if I bless you," he replied, "I would also be blessing the beatings you receive, and the beatings will only increase."

Those present laughed, and then the saint dismissed her, urging her to pray, be patient, and not to respond when her husband became angry. (*M.B., XVII, 441*). □



Don Bosco's Madonna



## THE ANNUNCIATION: A RAINBOW OF HOPE

by A.B. Bosco, Salesian Cooperator

The Feast of the Annunciation, celebrated on March 25, is one of the most beautiful moments in the story of salvation. On that day, the angel Gabriel came to a humble young woman in Nazareth and brought her an extraordinary message: she would conceive and give birth to the Son of God (Luke 1:26-38).

Mary's "Yes" to God changed the history of the world. Her faith opened the door for Jesus, the Light of the World, to enter human life. The feast comes exactly

nine months before Christmas and reminds us that every divine promise begins with trust. When we say "Yes" to God in the small events of our lives, new hope begins to grow within us—just as it did in Mary.

### The Angel's Greeting — A Heavenly Rainbow

When the angel appeared, his words were gentle and full of wonder: "*Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you.*"

These words became the first



part of the prayer we now call the Hail Mary.

The early saints often meditated on this greeting. One of them, St. Anthony of Padua, preached that the *Hail Mary* was like a rainbow placed in the clouds, a sign of peace between God and humanity. Just as God set the rainbow in the sky after the flood as a promise of mercy (Genesis 9:13), so the angel's words were a new covenant of peace. Through Mary, heaven and earth were joined again.

St. Anthony said that the brightness of the rainbow showed Mary's beauty, its curve her humility, and its origin in the sun her divine motherhood. It is also told that whenever St. Anthony saw an image or statue of the Blessed Virgin, he would bow reverently and recite the Hail Mary (Ubaldo d'Alençon, *Life of St. Anthony of Padua*, 1899). This small act of love kept Mary close to his heart and reminded him that God's grace shines through her.

### Two Voices in One Prayer

The *Hail Mary* has two parts. The first comes from heaven—the words of Gabriel. The second comes from earth—the words of Elizabeth, Mary's cousin, when the two women met. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth cried out:

*"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb."* (Luke 1:42)

Together these two greetings form a bridge between heaven and earth, like the two ends of a rainbow. Gabriel spoke of grace, and Elizabeth spoke of blessing. Grace came down from God; blessing rose up from humankind.

The prayer brings both together in perfect harmony.

Elizabeth's joy was so great that the child in her womb, John the Baptist, leaped for joy. Whenever we pray the *Hail Mary*, we too share that same joy. We repeat the angel's greeting and Elizabeth's blessing, and then we add our own plea:

*"Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death."*

This prayer has comforted countless hearts for more than two thousand years. It is simple enough for a child to learn and deep enough for saints to contemplate.

### Mary in the Heart

#### of St. John Bosco

The *Hail Mary* was also the favourite prayer of St. John Bosco, the friend of the young and founder of the Salesians. Don Bosco believed that every grace we receive passes through Mary's hands. He often told his boys, *"When you are in trouble, say a Hail Mary."* (*Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco*, Vol. V, Salesiana Publishers, Turin.)

One evening, Don Bosco was called to the bedside of a boy who was very ill and near death. The doctors had lost hope. Don Bosco knelt beside him and began to pray the *Hail Mary* with deep faith, asking Mary Help of Christians to intercede. Before the prayer ended, the boy opened his eyes and whispered, "Father, I am saved." By morning he was completely well (*Biographical Memoirs*, Vol. IV).

In Don Bosco's Oratory, the *Hail Mary* was prayed before and after every lesson, game, or meal. It was the spiritual heartbeat of

the community. He wanted his boys to see Mary not only as a Mother in heaven but also as a gentle presence walking among them, leading them to Jesus.

### Mary's "Yes"

#### —A Model for Our Lives

The Feast of the Annunciation calls us to remember the power of Mary's "Yes." She did not know what the future would bring, but she trusted completely in God's love. Her faith became the doorway through which the Savior entered the world.

We may not have an angel standing before us, but God still speaks to each of us in quiet ways—through our conscience, through Scripture, through the needs of others. Like Mary, we are invited to answer, *"Be it done unto me according to Your word."* Every "Yes" we give to God—no matter how small—adds a new color to the rainbow of hope stretching across the world.

### The Rainbow Today

Our times often feel cloudy with fear, conflict, and confusion. Yet the message of the Annunciation breaks through those clouds with light. The *Hail Mary* remains a rainbow of peace between God and His people. When we pray it, we join Gabriel and Elizabeth in praising God for His mercy, and we invite Mary to walk with us in faith.

St. Anthony's bow before every statue of Our Lady (*Life of St. Anthony of Padua*), Don Bosco's miracle through the *Hail Mary* (*Biographical Memoirs*, Vol. IV), and Mary's own "Yes" are all threads of the same divine story. They remind us that hope is not

an abstract idea—it is a living relationship with God, made visible through Mary.

Every rainbow appears after rain. In the same way, every *Hail Mary* spoken in pain or uncertainty becomes a sign that the storm will pass and that God's promise still holds true.

### Conclusion:

#### Living the Hail Mary

The Feast of the Annunciation invites us to rediscover the *Hail Mary* as more than a familiar prayer. It is a message of peace from heaven, a song of joy from Elizabeth, and a plea of trust from every believer. It is the rainbow of God's mercy that arches over every generation.

Like St. Anthony, let us greet Mary lovingly whenever we see her image. Like Don Bosco, let us teach the young to turn to her in every need. And like Mary herself, let us answer God's call with faith and humility.

When we whisper a *Hail Mary*, heaven bends toward us. The angel's voice, Elizabeth's joy, the saints' devotion, and our own longing for peace all meet in that simple prayer. It is truly the rainbow of hope that connects God's heart to ours—today and always. □





## MY VOCATION STORY

### FR. HERIBERTO HERRERA

Director Emeritus of *Boletín Salesiano*  
of Central America

By Zaida Navarrete

After 24 years and 144 editions of the *Salesian Bulletin* written, edited, and reviewed by him, Fr. Heriberto leaves this task with an indelible legacy in the minds of every communicator who knew him.

Writing an article about Fr. Heriberto is a challenging task because it's difficult to capture in just a few lines all the impactful contributions he has made to communication in the Divine Saviour Province and the revitalization of the *Salesian Bulletin* over the past 24 years. In 1999, Fr. Heriberto concluded his term as Provincial and was subsequently asked to take over the *Salesian Bulletin* from Fr. Hugo Estrada.

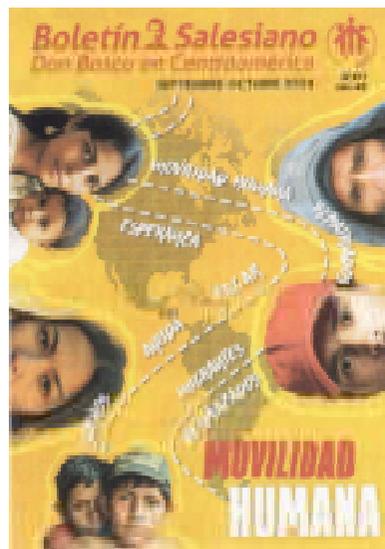
At that time, Fr. Heriberto's enthusiasm for technology was well-known; he was recognized as the first Salesian to use a personal computer. In addition to his impeccable writing style, he possessed a remarkable talent for using words to vividly describe and narrate everyday situations with artistic flair.

#### An indelible legacy

When Father Heriberto accepted the challenge of taking over the *Bulletin*, he immediately set to work to create a world-class magazine. His first step was to seek technical support, hiring a designer and a layperson—both Salesian cooperators—to help with the task. The first edition

produced by this team was released in December 1999. Over the next nine years, they developed a high-quality *Salesian Bulletin*, renowned for its excellent content and design.

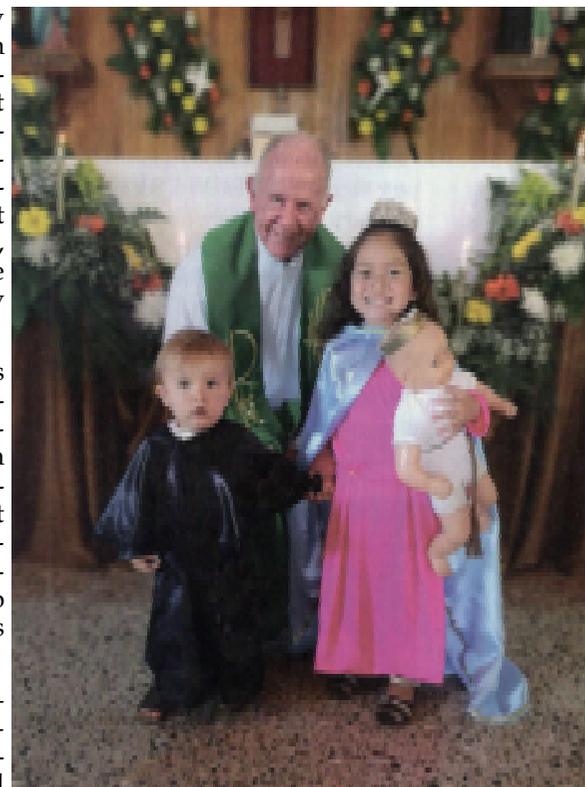
In 2009, as social networks and digital platforms surged in popularity, Father Heriberto initiated a project to transform the *Salesian Bulletin* into a website. To support this endeavour, he brought on board a journalist to join the existing team. The new



website not only made the *Bulletin* accessible to a global audience but also helped to establish a communication network throughout Central America, addressing the need to regularly update content.

To promote this initiative, he traveled to all Salesian institutions in the region, presenting the project and recruiting collaborators (correspondents) to contribute news and updates.

The *Boletín Salesiano de Centroamérica* has expanded beyond the region and is now accessible in other countries through its website. The need for improved content and design has become clear. Fr. Heriberto has consistently emphasized quality and has instilled this work ethic in his team, ensuring that the *Boletín Salesiano* remains a standout publication among similar editions worldwide. Now, 24 years later, with 144 editions of the *Salesian Bulletin* written, edited, and reviewed by Don Heriberto, he leaves behind an



*His career in Salesian communications is a shining example of dedication and quality. His ability to blend faith and technology and his vision to expand the frontiers of communication in the Salesian community have left an indelible mark.*

indelible legacy in the minds of every communicator who has had the privilege of working with him.

#### Innovation, dedication, quality

In the Salesian community, he is held in high esteem and deep affection by the directors of *Salesian Bulletins* from all regions. The central social communication team shares this aff-

action as he embarks on a new chapter, with the hope of continuing the quality and journalistic passion that are hallmarks of Don Bosco's media legacy.

His career in Salesian communication stands as a shining example of innovation, dedication, and quality. He has skilfully blended faith with technology, and his vision has expanded the frontiers of communication within the Salesian community, leaving an indelible mark.

Through his leadership in establishing the Salesian Bulletin and his commitment to embracing the digital age, he has not only enriched the lives of those around him but also laid a strong foundation for future generations of Salesian communicators.

As he steps down from his role, he leaves behind a legacy of excellence and passion, serving as a beacon of inspiration that will continue to guide Salesian communication for years to come. His story reminds us that the true impact of a life dedicated to service transcends words and endures over time.



His career in Salesian communications exemplifies innovation, dedication, and quality. His ability to integrate faith with technology, along with his vision to broaden the communication frontiers within the Salesian community, has made a lasting impact. □

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## IN A CHEERFUL MOOD

### A Great Man

Girl: "Every time I look at your I think of a great man."

Boy: "You flatter me, who is it?"

Girl: "Darwin."

### Oh, None of Us

"I suppose you think I'm a perfect idiot!"

"Oh, none of us is perfect."

### Absolutely

"Wise men are always in doubt. Only idiots are sure of their case."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Yes, absolutely."

### Keeps them Away

"They say that an apple a day will keep the doctor away."

"Why stop there? An onion a day will keep everyone away."

### No Negative

"But you said she sang beautifully."

"No, I didn't."

"What did you say?"

"I said she was a beautiful singer."

### The Millionaire

"You see that old boy over there? He thinks in terms of millions."

"He doesn't look to me like a financier."

"He isn't. He is a bacteriologist."

### Funny Language

A Frenchman learning English said to his tutor, "English is a queer language. What does this sentence mean? 'Should Mr. Noble, who sits for this constituency, consent to stand again, he will in all probability have a walkover.'"

### Wrong Person

History Teacher: "Where was Nelson killed?"

Student: "Trafalgar Square."

Teacher: "Indeed! Then I suppose, Wellington was killed at Waterloo Station?"

Student: "No sir. That was Napoleon."

### Nothing To Compare

An American who saw Vesuvius in eruption, when twitted on the fact that the United States had nothing to compare with that, said simply, "I should say not. What's more, Niagara Falls would put that thing out in less than two minutes."

### No Butts

"Do you wish the court to understand taht you refuse to reew your dog license?"

"Yes, your honour, but..."

"We want no 'but'. You will be fined. You know the license has expired."

"Yes, and so has the dog."

### Who Made You?

A father whose looks are not such as to warrant the breaking up of all the statues of Apollo tells this on himself

"My little girl was sitting on my lap facing the mirror. After gazing intently at her reflection for some minutes, she said, "Papa, did God make you?"

"Certainly, my dear, I told her, "and did He make me too?" - taking another look in the mirror. "Certainly, dear. What makes you ask?"

"Seems to me He's doing better work lately." □

## THE PERFUME

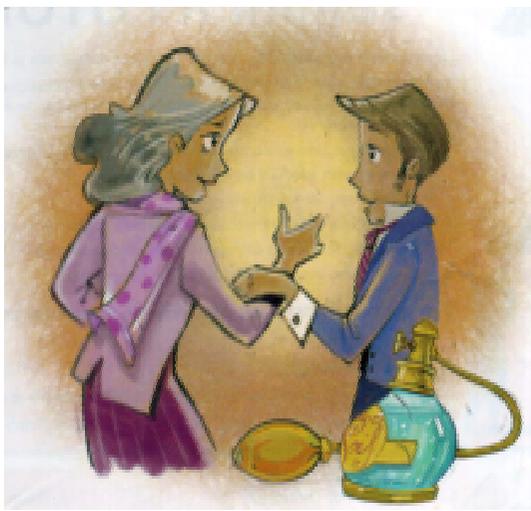
There was a little boy named Teddy who didn't play with the other children. His clothes were untidy, and he often appeared grumpy and lonely. Mrs. Thompson was supposed to address Teddy's poor academic performance, but first, she wanted to review the results each child had achieved in previous years. Afterward, she examined Teddy's situation. However, when she looked at his file, she was surprised to see that he had been excellent and brilliant in primary school.

During Christmas, all the students brought presents beautifully wrapped in ribbons and shiny paper, except for Teddy. His gift was clumsily wrapped in heavy brown paper from a grocery bag. However, Mrs. Thompson opened his present before the others. Some of the children began to laugh when they saw a gemstone bracelet with several stones missing and a small bottle of perfume that was only a quarter full. But she silenced their laughter by exclaiming how pretty the bracelet was and applying a little perfume to her wrist.

That day, Teddy stayed after school, just long enough to say, "Mrs. Thompson, today you smelled like my mom when she used that perfume." After the other children had left, Mrs. Thompson cried for at least an hour. From that day on, she paid special attention to Teddy, and with her support, the little boy's spirits began to lift. By the end of the year, Teddy had become one of the best students.

Teddy graduated and embarked on a remarkable career. Before the wedding, he invited Mrs. Thompson to join him as the groom's mother.

Naturally, Mrs. Thompson accepted the invitation. And guess what she did? She wore that very bracelet, the one with the missing gemstones that Teddy had given her. She also made sure to wear the perfume that Teddy's mother had used the last Christmas they spent together. They embraced, and Teddy whispered in Mrs. Thompson's ear, "Thank you, ma'am, for believing in me." □



## LOVING CHILDREN TO THEIR LOVING MOTHER

### A Journey of Faith and Gratitude

These lines of Sacred Scripture: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105) have guided me to place my trust fully in God, convinced that all healing and direction come from Him. I am Clint Climaco Colaco, a thirty-four-year-old lawyer from Goa, India. Since 16 September 2024, I have been suffering from vitiligo (leucoderma), a condition without a permanent cure. During this period of suffering, I turned with complete confidence to the Heavenly Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, firmly believing that through her intercession before her Son, Jesus Christ, healing would come. I soon realized that neither personal effort nor intellect could overcome this trial. Total surrender to God was required. Invoking the intercession of the Mystical Rose, I sought guidance and strength. At this time, my Godmother and aunt, Cynthia Nair, advised my mother to consult Dr. Trupti Prabhu Alvenkar. I recognize this counsel as a moment of Divine Providence. On 7 October 2024, I met Dr. Trupti at the Primary Health Centre in Navelim. From our first meeting, I experienced a deep sense of peace and trust, convinced that she was the physician chosen for me by God. Her humility, compassion, and professional integrity left a lasting impression. Under her care, I received not only medical treatment but also reassurance that supported my healing journey. Through this trial, I came to understand that God permits suffering for a greater purpose. Like Job and St Peter, faith is refined through adversity. Psalm 46:1 "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" —became a source of strength. I also experienced the power of intercessory prayer, as taught by St Paul, and remain deeply grateful to all who prayed for me. In moments of difficulty, I drew comfort from the words of Saint Bernard: "If you follow Mary, you will not go astray." Through her maternal intercession, I remain confident that I will be healed by the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ. I conclude with sincere gratitude to my family, friends, and all who supported me, and above all to the Blessed Virgin Mary, our Lord Jesus Christ, and Dr. Trupti Prabhu Alvenkar. I offer this testimony in thanksgiving and encourage all who read it to remain steadfast in faith, to pray the Rosary, and to adore Christ in the Holy Eucharist, trusting that Heaven responds to sincere prayer. (Clint Climaco Colaco, Goa)

### POPE'S WORLDWIDE PRAYER NETWORK

MARCH 2025

*For disarmament and peace*

*Let us pray that nations move toward effective disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, and that world leaders choose the path of dialogue and diplomacy instead of violence.*

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### MODEL OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

The ideal of humble and profound Christian fulfilment finds its perfect expression in Mary Most Holy. She lived this vocation fully on earth and now shares in its glory in heaven. Devotion to Our Lady continues to flourish in the Church, and we joyfully contemplate her – the Mother of Christ, Mother of God, and our Mother – as the model of Christian perfection and the reflection of authentic human virtue. We believe that devotion to Mary is a source of Gospel wisdom. Chosen to give the Word of God human flesh in purity and beauty, she teaches us true Christian authenticity. Once again, we turn to her with trust, imploring her as a gentle and loving teacher of life.  
(*Ecclesiam suam n. 18*)

**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.

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