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Welcome to our spring edition of the Don Bosco Today.

"When we are about to do something let us see, first of all, whether it is for the greater glory of God. Having made certain of that, go ahead, do not hesitate for your work will be successful."

Don Bosco

Front Cover picture © Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa on Unsplash

Mary Help Of Christians In The "City Of Eternal Heat"

Once again in my travels around the Salesian world, I was able to see for myself that Mary Help of Christians - as Don Bosco promised - is a beacon that illuminates, a safe harbour and maternal love for her Son and for all of us, her sons and daughters.



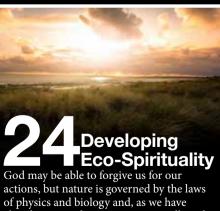
Heading Tbc?
The Kingdom of God requires our collaboration, but above all, it is the Lord's initiative and gift to us. Our fragile work, if it is inserted into that of God, is not afraid of difficulties because the Lord's victory is certain. His love will cause every seed of good present on earth to sprout and grow. This is the certainty that animates and consoles us.



Yes and no
From cradle to grave, perhaps the most frequently articulated words and attitudes are 'yes' and 'no'. They are vibrant, universal monosyllables. Jesus of Nazareth was very aware of this, and on one occasion told a little story to illustrate it.



The Inspiration of The Young
On the morning that she went to the guillotine, Sophie said: "Such a fine, sunny day, and I have to go... What does my death matter, if through us, thousands of people are awakened and stirred to action?"



already seen and continue to see, will not be

so forgiving of our actions.

It does seem rather a long time since we were speaking, but nevertheless it does give me great pleasure in greeting you with our latest Don Bosco Today.

I think it is fair to say that many of our articles this time are thoughtful and reflective, allowing us the opportunity to slow down and ask ourselves a number of questions: 'Where do I find myself in this?'; 'Does this sum up where I find myself today?'; 'What can I offer my immediate world?'

But this is also an opportunity for celebration. This year so far, we have celebrated the coronation of King Charles III at Westminster Abbey—a symbolic ceremony combining a religious service and pageantry. The King became the 40th reigning monarch to be crowned there since 1066. Queen Camilla was crowned beside him before a huge parade back to Buckingham Palace. As well as all the usual pomp, splendour and televisual sensation, this was a family affair, with the King's grandson, Prince George, among the pages, alongside Camilla's grandchildren, Lola, Eliza, Gus, Louis and Freddy. We also celebrated the Diaconate Ordination of Bro Steven Lloyd SDB at Sacred Heart Parish Church, Battersea, and joined 8,000 young Catholics at Wembley Arena listening to,

among others, Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, Archbishop of Perth, Australia, who challenged all of us who were there:

"I am really saying that God is asking this of you. In our time God has given us Pope Francis, who keeps reminding us that we have to become a missionary Church, a Church that doesn't stay hidden inside its buildings but gets up, gets going, and takes some risks in order to share what we have with others."

Don Bosco was a man of hope. According to Fr Carlo Nanni SDB, hope must constitute the basic attitude of whoever shares the Salesian spirit and wishes to educate according to the preventive system.

Let's take that Salesian hope and celebration forward as we look forward to the summer months.

Fr Bob Gardner SDB

Editor Salesian Link robert.gardner@salesians.org.uk





Ordination To
The Diaconate
Brother Steven Lloyd SDB was
ordained to the Diaconate by Bishop Paul
Hendricks, Auxiliary Bishop of Southwark, on
Saturday December 3, in the Parish Church of
the Sacred Heart.



26The Last Supper

stop the Church from falling into ruins".

Jesus wants to go to Jerusalem for Passover. Knowing that he has to say goodbye to his friends there, he prepares a very special feast.



Affairs of the Heart 3
For St Francis, prayer and life are one, much like how breathing out follows breathing in.
We breathe in the love of God through prayer (affective love) and breathe out love in serving

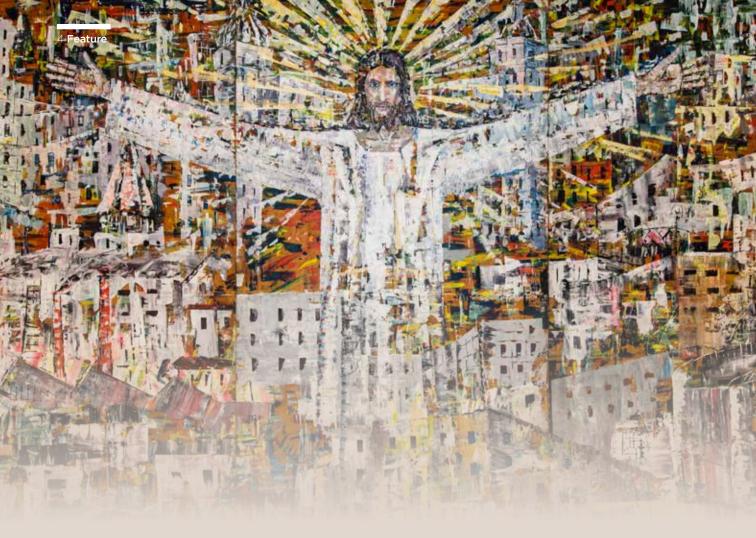
our neighbour (effective love).

Obituary for Fr Daniel Donohoe SDB

"I can state with confidence that he is a boy of more than average intelligence. I can also recommend him as a diligent, trustworthy boy, anxious to assimilate knowledge."

31 Obituary for Fr Des O'Riordan SDB

Fr Des was an enthusiastic traveller. He regularly visited his family and friends in England and Ireland. He made seventeen pilgrimages to Fatima.



The Message of The Rector Major DON ÁNGEL FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME

Mary Help Of Christians In The "City Of Eternal Heat"

"Once again in my travels around the Salesian world, I was able to see for myself that Mary Help of Christians—as Don Bosco promised—is a beacon that illuminates, a safe harbour, and maternal love for her Son and for all of us, her sons and daughters." y dear friends, faithful readers of the Salesian Bulletin, and all friends of

Don Bosco and his precious charism, I come to you today, in this month of May, to tell you, as is my custom, something that I experienced recently and that has touched my heart. At the same time, it has made me reflect on a certain responsibility we have regarding our devotion to Mary Help of Christians. I will tell you why.

A Salesian City

It took place at the end of March when I was visiting Peru again. I wanted to draw near to the most north-eastern part of the country to be present to a city and a Salesian presence that is very significant, for several reasons:

- Because it is called by its own inhabitants "the city of eternal heat". Indeed, it is very hot, and the humidity makes it feel even more so.
- At the same time, it is a very Salesian city. The Salesians have been present there for more than a century. Thus, a whole style of relationships and educational ties that are very familiar, very simple—in short, very Salesian—have permeated the spirit of that town.
- Above all it is a very Marian city, one incredibly devoted to Mary Help of Christians since it lies in the orbit of two Salesian presences.
- Last, I would like to highlight the magnificent educational service given at Don Bosco School since the arrival of the Salesians and, especially in recent decades, with the Salesian presence called 'Bosconia'. This is a humble, beautiful work in one of the poorer neighbourhoods plagued by conflict, on the outskirts of town. Thanks to the joint effort of many people (both in civil society and in the Church), and especially thanks to the charism of Don Bosco, that part of the city continues to be transformed, providing the

opportunity for hundreds of boys and girls to receive technical training. Without this school, they would not have any chance for a profession. Here, they learn and apply a skill and train for the world of work. There is even a magnificent Salesian medical centre in Bosconia that is run by one of the official groups of our Family, the *Damas Salesianas* (Salesian Dames).

I believe I have quickly described what I encountered in the city of eternal heat. This was all worth mentioning, but it is not all. Here, an especially deep devotion to Mary Help of Christians touched my heart. In an almost impromptu gatheringbecause only a couple of weeks earlier had I announced that I would like to meet them-I met a crowd of more than 3,000 people who gather at 6:00 pm on any given weekday to celebrate the Eucharist in honour of our Mother, the Help of Christians. I saw hundreds of children and young people with their fathers and mothers, and dozens and dozens of boys, girls and teenagers from the various Salesian oratories in the area, along with their teachers, and others. The eternal heat of the city seemed little to me compared to the faith, devotion, interiority and prayer, the singing and all that I imagined was filling the hearts of those people, just as it filled mine.

Once again in my travels around the Salesian world, I was able to see for myself that Mary Help of Christians—as Don Bosco promised—is a beacon that illuminates, a safe harbour and maternal love for her Son and for all of us, her sons and daughters. She is certainly the MOTHER to whom we ought to abandon ourselves, for she will always bring us to her Beloved Son. I saw this also in Piura.

It is a sine qua non

At the same time, I would like to add another small comment, a necessary self-criticism of all of us who are sons and daughters of Don Bosco. It is this: the Spirit of God reaches where He wants and touches, as only He knows, the hearts of His faithful. This is also the case with devotion to the Mother of the Son of God, but she has always desired to count on us. The criticism I make is that this devotion to the

Mother of Heaven, to our Mother the Help of Christians, has not been made known like this, with the same intensity and the same apostolic passion in all parts of the world or in all our presences. There are places where we have developed schools, have made progress, and have surely served the good of those people, but we have not known how to make our Mother known and loved. This would be incomprehensible to Don Bosco. I will tell you that it is equally incomprehensible and unacceptable to me. If, in Don Bosco's family, there are people who do not turn to or spread devotion to the Help of Christians, they may be devout but they will not be sons and daughters of Don Bosco. She is our Mother. Devotion to the Help of Christians as the Mother of the Lord and our Mother is not optional in the Salesian charism—as it was not optional for Don Bosco. It is a sine qua non [necessary or indispensable requirement].

I wish with all my heart that she, the Mother of the Beloved Son, she our Helper, continue to be as special to everyone in all parts of the world as she is in the city of eternal heat (Piura, Peru).

Happy feast of Mary Help of Christians to everyone around the world.



pictures © ANS/Rome

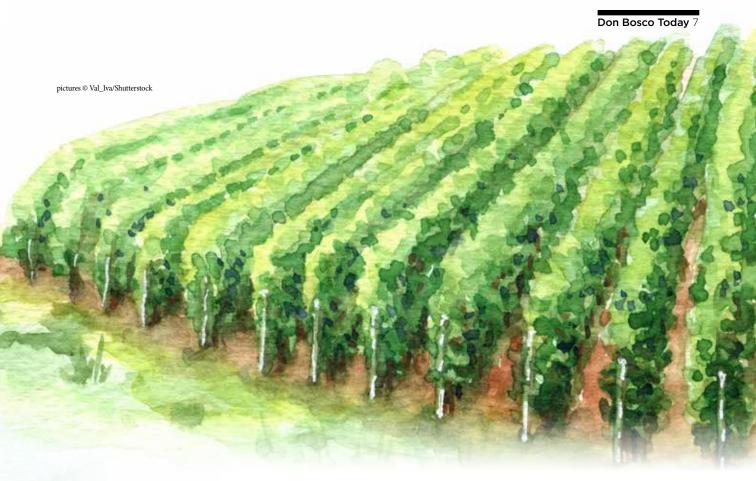
Yes and no

from cradle to grave, perhaps the most frequently articulated words and attitudes are 'yes' and 'no'. They are vibrant, universal monosyllables. Jesus of Nazareth was very aware of this, and on one occasion told a little story to illustrate it. A landowner had two sons, probably in their late teens or early twenties. He asked one of them, probably the elder, to go and do some work in his vineyard. The youth responded point blank in the negative. Later, he regretted this, changed his mind, and went to work. The father made the same request of the other son. This time the response was an enthusiastic 'of course'. But he did not in fact find his way into the vineyard but discovered more interesting alternatives.

In itself, the parable could have originally been a defence of Jesus' ministry to the outcasts and sinners in the face of criticism from the religious elite. Those on the margins of organised religion, considered 'sinners' by the religious establishment, originally saying 'no', have been the ones who have responded to Jesus' approach, his message, his openness and compassion. They have welcomed the in-break of the Kingdom. Those who felt comfortable and secure in their traditional religiosity, however, especially the leaders, appearing to say 'yes' to God, have been unwilling to move out of their normal parameters into the new reality which Jesus is introducing.

In this parable the two young people are clearly contrasted. Often that is true of siblings, be they male and/or female. Jesus is very much aware of what can happen in family relationships. It is not difficult for us to identity with the three characters in the story. As parents, pastors, educators, we have all been in the position of asking others to do something for us. Sometimes the response has been a refusal, and this is hard to take. We feel disappointed, hurt, let down, rejected, angry—a whole gamut of emotions.





A transformation, like a mini-resurrection, occurs when the individual changes his/her mind, and fulfils our request. Sometimes, on the other hand, the response to our request has seemed like an enthusiastic or generous 'yes', that wonderful little word of acceptance, empathy, cooperation. This makes us feel good, and maybe relieves some anxiety or hesitation. And then there follows the shock of realising that the 'yes' has come to nothing, and we experience another range of uncomfortable emotions. Adults, as well as children, are capable of both types of response, as we know. How we handle these situations always presents a challenge. Do we shrug and let the situation pass, or react with a reprimand or with a gentle question? It is always good to express our thanks and appreciation or to offer reasons for our requests.

Looking back on our lives, we may recall occasions when we have been the ones to refuse to do what has been asked of us: 'No way!' We have probably felt that the request was unfair or unreasonable, too demanding or inconvenient. But later, we've thought better of it, and decided to abandon our negativity and our upset feelings and carry out the request made of us. Sometimes, the acceptance has been rather grudging, sometimes more generous. Or perhaps we are aware of occasions when we have said 'OK' for peace in the house, for a quiet life, to humour someone, and our response has not been genuine and sincere. We have gone away and neglected to keep our word.

This parable, then, gives us an opportunity to think about the way we respond to requests made of us, the way in which we treat those who ask. It also challenges us to extrapolate a little and consider our response to God. This was the issue for Jesus in telling this parable. Perhaps in the past we have at times uttered

an outright 'no' to God's approach and God's demands, but then repented, changed mind and heart, and responded with love. Perhaps we need to make time and space to listen carefully for what God is asking of us today—through the words of scripture, through other people, through situations which crop up, through the world around us, through the longings deep in our hearts.

The parable also invites us to ponder whether we are prone to simply go through the motions of discipleship. We say a kind of 'yes' to God but somehow don't quite get round to doing what is required. We procrastinate, we manufacture flimsy excuses, we develop avoidance techniques, effectively turning our 'yes' into a 'no'. We are missing or wasting opportunities for growth, for generosity, for unselfishness. We are keeping God at a 'safe' distance, and in that case, we are only half alive, if that.

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus several times stresses the importance of action rather than words. It is not the one who repeatedly invokes the Lord who will enter the Kingdom of heaven, "but the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" (7:21). The wise man who builds his house on a rock is one "who hears these words of mine and acts on them" (7:24). Those who do the heavenly Father's will become the brothers, sisters and mother of Jesus (12:50). In the parable of the Judgement, the emphasis in Jesus' words is on action which expresses care and concern for those in need (25:31–46). Perhaps our current parable also shows that God looks to the final outcome of our lives. "God can put up with an initial 'No', and a lot of other 'No's' besides, on the way to a final and lasting 'Yes."

Michael T Winstanley SDB

¹ B. Byrne, Lifting the Burden (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2004), 161.



Stamp in Germany showing Sophie Scholl, circa 1991

© Shutterstock ID 123613843

is a series looking at the lives of young people.

ophie Scholl is not widely known outside Germany, but she is an iconic figure in her native country and her story is extraordinary.

Sophie Magdalena Scholl was born May 9, 1921, into a large German family. She was the daughter of Magdalena (née Müller) and Robert Scholl, a liberal politician and ardent Nazi critic, who was the mayor of her hometown of Forchtenberg am Kocher in the Free People's State of Württemberg at the time of her birth. She was the fourth of six children. Sophie was brought up in a Lutheran

household in which Christian values mattered, and she had a carefree and secure childhood When Sophie was ten years old, the family moved to Ulm, a mid-size southern town dating back to the Middle Ages, where her father worked as state auditor and tax consultant.

A new order

In early 1933, when Sophie was eleven, Adolf Hitler became the German chancellor. Soon after his election, Hitler and his Nazis began to take complete control of Germany.

They banned political parties other than their own; formed the violent Gestapo secret police; banned anti-Nazi media; and eliminated the Reichstag of the Weimar Republic, which was the democratic German governing institution elected using a system of proportional representation. Like her brothers and sisters, Sophie was influenced by the changes that took place in their school. Hitler immediately made changes to the school curriculum. All school textbooks were withdrawn before new ones were published that reflected the Nazi ideology. A directive issued in January 1934 made it compulsory for schools to educate their pupils in the spirit of 'National Socialism'. Education in 'racial awareness' began at school and children were constantly reminded of their racial duties to the 'national community'. Biology, along with political education, became compulsory. Children learnt about 'worthy' and 'unworthy' races, about breeding and hereditary diseases.

Sophie participated in BDM with elated enthusiasm but thought it absurd that her Jewish friend, Luise, was not allowed to join. A great deal was spoken about the Fatherland, of comradeship, the union of the Germanic people and love of the homeland. Young people were impressed and listened eagerly when such things were discussed. Hitler's message that he wanted to help the homeland back to greatness, happiness and security pervaded. He would ensure that everyone had a job and enough to eat. He wouldn't rest until every single German enjoyed independence, freedom and happiness. For the first few years of Nazi rule, all of the Scholl

children were infected by the excitement that permeated their schools and community: the wearing of uniforms, marching in torchlit processions through the streets of Ulm and camping out in the country, and they considered themselves an important part in the rebuilding of their deeply divided and demoralised nation.

As the Nazi juggernaut continued to steamroll through the 1930s, 'compulsory youth service' was introduced, which meant young people were forced to join the Hitler Youth. Those who resisted faced harsh consequences, including imprisonment. By dissolving and synchronising youth associations including the scouting movement, Socialist Workers' Youth and Christian youth associations, the regime tried to dominate how all young people were influenced and shaped.

The Scholl children were keen to join the Hitler Youth, and their parents, though they had given them a liberal upbringing, did not forbid it as they believed the children should make their own decisions. Despite Robert Scholl providing compelling reasons against joining, the children contended that Hitler had solved the problem of unemployment and pointed to the new motorways being built throughout the land. At first his arguments fell on deaf ears, and his children became enthusiastic members of the Hitler Youth and its female branch, the League of German Girls (BDM). Sophie participated in BDM with elated enthusiasm but thought it absurd that her Jewish friend, Luise, was not allowed to join.

The shoulder-to-shoulder marching and the repeated sloganeering that emphasised the group rather than the individual began to have a suffocating effect on Sophie, who always had a sure sense of herself that she never totally lost even when the marching, singing and saluting were at their height.

Before long, Sophie became a BDM group leader. However, as Nazi propaganda tightened its grip on her young life, she gradually started to become disillusioned. Her elder brother, Hans, was a leader of the local Hitler Youth and had been thrilled to be chosen to be the flag bearer when his unit attended the Nuremberg Rally in 1936. But when he returned, he had changed. The image and model of the Hitler Youth which had been impressed upon him there was totally different from his own ideals. Hans underwent a remarkable transformation. Sophie was very close to Hans and this change compounded her increasing disappointment in the reality of living in Nazi Germany. She could no longer read her favourite books or sing certain songs, then her Jewish classmates had to leave school.

Seeds of doubt

Sophie also began feeling discontent at school. Teachers who did not support the Nazi Party had been sacked, others pretended to support the new regime just to keep their jobs, and Nazi indoctrination perpetuated. Teachers encouraged their students to inform on their parents, something that Sophie would never do. It became increasingly clear that the BDM, like other National Socialist programmes, was designed for compliance rather than freedom. The shoulder-to-shoulder marching and the repeated sloganeering that emphasised the group rather than the individual began to have a suffocating effect on Sophie, who always had a sure sense of herself that she never totally lost even when the marching,

singing and saluting were at their height. The persistent pressure to succumb to organised activity became more and more unbearable.

In an attempt to keep young people under the supervision of government agencies and off the streets for as long as possible, at the age of nineteen, every German had to spend six months participating in the National Labour Service (RAD). The scheme also removed thousands

from the labour market, thus reducing the unemployment statistics. Six months of National Labour Service was followed by conscription into the German Army. Hans joined the cavalry unit in 1937. A few months later he was arrested in his barracks by the Gestapo. Apparently, it had been reported that while living in Ulm he had been taking part in activities that were not part of the Hitler Youth programme. Sophie, her sister Inge and brother Werner were also arrested. As Sophie was only sixteen years old, she was not considered a threat and was sent home. The Gestapo searched the Scholl house confiscating diaries, journals, poems, essays, folk song collections, and other evidence of being members of an illegal

organisation. Inge and Werner were released after a week of detention. Hans was detained three weeks longer while the Gestapo attempted to persuade him to inform on his friends. This first-hand experience of the Nazi's aggression led the siblings to see how terrible the party was.

On September 1, 1939, Hitler invaded Poland and two days later, France and Britain declared war on Germany. The older Scholl brothers were sent off to fight on the front. Sophie's life in Ulm changed as well. She graduated high school in the spring of 1940 and started an apprenticeship to become a kindergarten teacher. Sophie's hopes that



becoming a teacher would be an acceptable substitute for the compulsory RAD were quashed, and she entered the service in the spring of 1941. She hated it. The military-like regimen and mind-numbing routine caused her to find solace in her own spirituality, guided by readings of theologian Augustine of Hippo. She wrote down her thoughts, noting that her "soul was hungry"—she longed for an autonomous life, an end to the war, and for happiness with her boyfriend Fritz Hartnagel, who was now fighting on the Eastern Front. Her doubts about the regime grew. Sophie wrote, rather bitterly, to Fritz: "I can't understand how some people continuously risk other people's lives... Don't tell me it's for the Fatherland."

In May 1942, she enrolled at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich as a student of biology and philosophy. Her brother Hans was studying medicine at the same institution, and the siblings socialised with the same group of friends, said to have been united by their mutual appreciation for art, culture and philosophy.

But these were violent times. Some of the students had seen active service where they learnt about the crimes committed in Poland and Russia. They were living in a dictatorship, and they were determined to resist. So began their campaign of passive resistance.

A small endeavour with huge consequences

There were just six members of the White Rose (*Weiße Rose*) group, originally founded by Sophie's brother Hans and his friend Alexander Schmorell. They were joined by Sophie, Willi Graf, Christoph Probst, and a professor of philosophy and musicology at the University of Munich, Kurt Huber. Combining youthful idealism with an impressive knowledge of German literature and Christian religious teachings, the students published their beliefs in a series of leaflets, first typed on a typewriter, then multiplied via mimeograph. The first of those leaflets, published in June 1942, quoted liberally from the works of Friedrich Schiller and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and it advocated passive resistance to the Nazi war effort. This first leaflet

concluded with the statement: "Do not forget that every nation deserves the government that it endures." Selecting addresses from phone directories and hand-writing each envelope, they posted leaflets to professors, booksellers, authors, friends and others in Munich.

The third leaflet showed how chillingly accurate they were in their accusations and calls to action, and the powerful insights they provided about Nazi Germany: "Our current state' is the dictatorship of evil. Why do you tolerate these rulers gradually robbing you, in public and in private, of one right after another, until one day nothing, absolutely nothing, remains but the machinery of the state, under the command of criminals and drunkards?"

In their attempt to raise the profile of the resistance and to stop the war effort, they gave clear advice and advocated sabotage. Their fifth pamphlet stated: "Sabotage in armament plants and war industries, sabotage at all gatherings, rallies, public ceremonies, and organisations of the National Socialist Party. Obstruction of the smooth functioning of the war machine... Try to convince all your acquaintances... of the hopelessness of this war; of our spiritual and economic enslavement at the hands of the National Socialists; of the destruction of all moral and religious values; and urge them to passive resistance!"

Acquiring such large amounts of paper, envelopes and stamps at a time of strict rationing without raising suspicion was problematic, but the students managed by engaging a wide-ranging network of supporters in cities and towns as far north as Hamburg, and as far south as Vienna. These networks were also used to distribute the leaflets in an attempt to trick the Gestapo into believing the White Rose had locations all across the country.

By early 1943, the group felt empowered and hopeful. Their activism seemed to be working, unnerving the authorities and sparking discussions amongst their peers. Their group was well-organised, and they were about to establish even more connections to other underground resistance groups. The German army's disastrous defeat at





3 wooden crosses marks the graves of the young siblings Hand and Sophie Scholl and friend Christoph Probost - murdered by the Gestapo in February 1943 @ Shutterstock ID 1405301363

Stalingrad was a turning point on the Eastern Front, and voices of dissent grew louder at the university. This encouraged them to work more boldly, distributing the leaflets directly in person and daubing anti-Nazi slogans like 'Down with Hitler' and 'Freedom' on the walls around Munich. Their sixth—and last—leaflet reads: "Even the most dull-witted German has had his eyes opened by the terrible bloodbath, which, in the name of the freedom and honour of the German nation, they have unleashed upon Europe, and unleash anew each

day. The German name will remain forever tarnished unless finally the German youth stands up, pursues both revenge and atonement, smites our tormentors, and founds a new intellectual Europe. Students! The German people look to us! The responsibility is ours [to] break the terror of the National Socialists."

Arrest and trial

On February 18, 1943, Sophie and Hans brought a suitcase full of leaflets to the university main building, and hurriedly dropped stacks of copies in the empty corridors for students to find when they left the lectures. It's not clear why Sophie climbed to the top-floor landing that overlooked the airy atrium of the university's main building and flung a stack of pamphlets over the balustrade. Most assume she wanted as many students as possible to see them. This was the moment that changed everything. As the papers fluttered down to the ground, she was watched by a caretaker, Jakob Schmid, a staunch supporter of the Nazis, who betrayed her to the Gestapo. They were arrested immediately. The draft for the seventh pamphlet was still in Hans' bag, which led to Christoph Probst's arrest the same day.

On the morning that she went to the guillotine, Sophie said: "Such a fine, sunny day, and I have to go... What does my death matter, if through us, thousands of people are awakened and stirred to action?"

Five days of long and arduous interrogations ended with a mock trial led by the infamous Roland Freisler, president of the People's Court. They accepted all the blame for the White Rose's actions. This attempt to save their friends from persecution failed in the end, and Willi Graf, Alexander Schmorell and Kurt Huber were arrested later in February and put to death shortly after.

Hans, Sophie and Christoph were sentenced to death for treason. They were executed by guillotine on February 22, 1943.

On the morning that she went to the guillotine, Sophie said: "Such a fine, sunny day, and I have to go... What does my death matter, if through us, thousands of people are awakened and stirred to action?"

Legacy

Even though the White Rose's members died during the war, their words continued to inspire those they left behind. While their deaths were only barely mentioned in German newspapers, they received attention abroad. In April, *The New York Times* wrote about student opposition in Munich. In June 1943, in a BBC broadcast aimed at Germans, Thomas Mann spoke of the White Rose's actions. The text of the sixth leaflet was smuggled into the United Kingdom where

they were reprinted and, in a scene mirroring Sophie's final act of resistance, were dropped over Germany by Allied planes in July of the same year.

In post-war Germany, the White Rose are still honoured, where schools and roads bear Sophie's name and that of her brother. Sophie's story looms particularly large in the history of Ulm. She represents the importance of acting according to one's beliefs and her story is a reminder to not be silent, and to fight for what Sophie wrote on the back of her indictment a day before she was killed: *Freiheit*—Freedom.

Sarah Seddon

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Salesian Archbishop speaks to Flame

of Perth, Australia, told young people from the United Kingdom that the Church needs their energy, their enthusiasm, their restlessness and their idealism. Wearing his Salesian scarf, he said the Church is always in danger of getting stuck and closing in on itself; thankfully God constantly does things to shake us all up.

"And when I say the Church needs all this, I am really saying that God is asking this of you. In our time God has given us Pope Francis, who keeps reminding us that we have to become a missionary Church, a Church that doesn't stay hidden inside its buildings but gets up, gets going, and takes some risks in order to share what we have with others," he said.

Focusing on the theme of the Congress, which is based on the 2023 World Youth Day to be held in Portugal, August 1–6, *Mary arose and went with haste*, Archbishop Costelloe explained that Mary is often described as the very first and very best disciple of Jesus and for that reason, she has a lot to teach us and that she really does matter.

"Mary is all about helping us to be the best disciples of Jesus that we can possibly be so she is always pointing us away from herself and directing us towards him. Remember what she said to the waiters at the wedding feast in Cana? The wine had run out—a very embarrassing situation for the new bride and groom—and Mary had gone to Jesus to see what he might do. Although she wasn't sure just what that might be, she simply turned to the waiters and said, 'You do whatever he tells you'. That's her message to us as well; that's what she most wants—that we do whatever the Lord is asking us to do," Archbishop Costelloe said.

The archbishop also spoke about St Francis of Assisi, drawing on the words of Pope Francis when he spoke at World Youth Day Poland in 2016.

"This was the modern Francis putting into contemporary language the words the other Francis heard so long ago. 'So maybe this is what God is saying: Young people of the UK, get up off your couches, go and help rebuild my Church, help it to set out on new and uncharted

paths. Help stop the Church from falling into ruins."

The theme of
Flame 23—which is
exactly 150 days before World
Youth Day in Lisbon—takes the
WYD Scripture "Mary arose and
ent with haste" and crystallises it into
the theme, "Rise Up!"



His Holiness prays that Almighty God will richly bless their time together, through Adoration, music, testimonies and the sharing of friendship with Christ and with one another.

—Passage from the message of Pope Francis to the young people at Flame







His Holiness Pope Francis was pleased to learn that young Catholics from across England and Wales are gathering at Flame at the Wembley Arena...he sends heartfelt good wishes and the assurance of his spiritual closeness to all taking part.

—Passage from the message of Pope Francis to the young people at Flame









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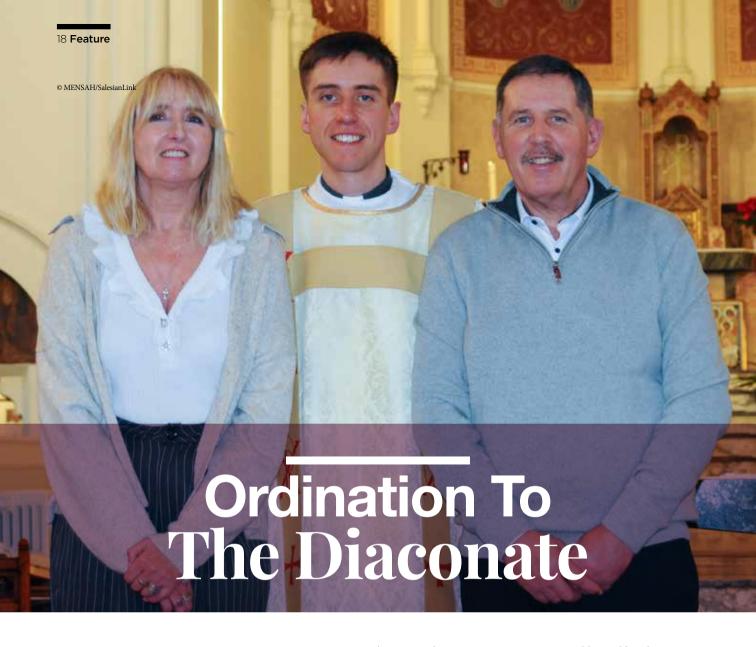
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THERESE WITHERS—artist

© Mazur/CBCEW







n Saturday December 3, 2022, Brother Steven Lloyd was ordained to the Diaconate by Bishop Paul Hendricks, Auxiliary Bishop of Southwark, at the Sacred Heart Parish Church, Battersea. During the service, Steven committed himself to the ministry of service and worship to the glory of God's name.

A packed church of Steven's family and friends, members of the Salesian family and his Salesian brothers made the whole day one of great celebration.

We keep Steven in our prayers for his ministry.



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STRENNA 2023



God requires our collaboration, but above all, it is the Lord's initiative and gift to us. Our fragile work, if it is inserted into that of God, is not afraid of difficulties because the Lord's victory is certain. His love will cause every seed of good present on earth to sprout and grow. This is the certainty that animates and consoles us.

In the current Strenna, the Rector Major invites us to recognise that there is so much good in our contemporary lives, but also so much suffering created by our modern way of being and acting. Therefore, he urges us to open our eyes and hearts to the action of God who establishes His Kingdom in a very special way by 'leavening', by energising the human heart, relationships, creation and all of humanity to grow with the Gospel.

Jesus presents us with a particular lifestyle based on humility, mercy and unconditional love for each person:

ANS MERCIA MAT

a style that is often not understood even by his disciples. Sometimes our mortal contribution, our small effort, may seem insignificant, but before God we know that it has great value. We cannot evaluate the success of our actions merely by the commitment we put into carrying them out, because all fruitfulness comes from God.

It is He who enlivens and multiplies the good with His presence in us and in all those who give themselves to improve the world. In this regard, Mother Mazzarello affirmed, "It is the hand of God that works in us" (cf. Isa 66:2), and she said it as the fruit of personal experience, of those who have allowed themselves to be enlightened and interiorly driven by God's grace. She was deeply convinced that one must allow oneself to be shaped throughout one's life by the creative and purifying hand of God.

Together in the Salesian family, we are challenged to be the 'good yeast' in the flour of humanity and to recognise the richness of the vocation of lay people in all educating communities, valuing in different cultures and societies the gift of life, strength of faith, creativity of love, the beauty of the

family, experience and professional competence, and Gospel witness.

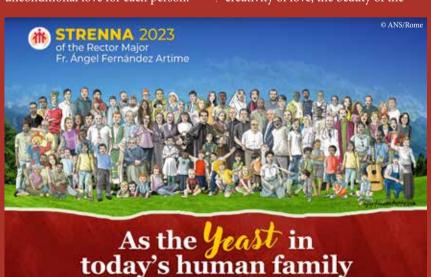
Salesian spirituality, which animates and inspires the Salesian Youth Movement, focuses on valuing daily life as a place where life, the experience of faith and growth in the capacity of young people to give is incarnated. It supports their leadership in compounding good and in carrying out actions and behaviours of solidarity that build and strengthen peace and fraternity among people. At the same time, young people continue to be recipients of our mission in the world, sharing the beauty and richness of the charism, the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church.

The style that animates the Salesian family unites young people, educators, consecrated men and women, and lay people in a single charismatic experience, which presupposes an environment of participation, sharing of values, prayer and holiness. In Salesian spirituality, relationships are marked by the 'family spirit' that eliminates distances, fosters confidence, brings generations closer together, and creates a climate of trust in which people can grow in freedom and collaborate with each other in reciprocity.

Being 'yeast' in today's world is responding to the call to be there, to be a presence that generates life that accompanies the growth and development, especially of young people, in feeling they are a living part of society and of the Church, willing to go beyond the narrow horizons of their own life to discover the ecclesial, political and social dimensions of commitment in the fabric of daily life.

Sr Chiara Cazzuola FMA

Sr Chiara is the 10th successor of St Mary Mazzarello as the Mother General of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians



The lay dimension in the Family of Don Bosco

Musings...

suspect that for most of us, 2020 went down in history as the 'quiet year'.

The ideals and new year resolutions made in January were shattered as February and March made us realise that something sinister was happening in our world. COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions made it a very different year for everyone across the globe. Activities that marked our lives like the annual summer break in the sun and Christmas traditions had to be put on hold. Office parties had to be cancelled, with care and physical distancing being observed even

at Midnight Mass. All the festive traditions that we associate with the typical family Christmas were forgotten in the bid to control this deadly virus. **Despite what certain** newspapers and some antivaccination activists would have us believe. Christmas 2020 was not cancelled, it was simply celebrated in a quieter way, with lack of fuss and crowds. While we were unable to call on friends for the Boxing Day drinks, many of us came to have a much clearer and positive image of what the feast

of Christmas was about. We came to appreciate and value that small family unit with whom we were celebrating. We realised that we did not have to spend thousands of pounds and visit countless homes to have a 'merry Christmas'!

Likewise, the summer dash to Spain, France or Florida had to be curtailed with 'staycation' becoming the new buzzword. For me, it was returning to the family cottage on Ireland's stunning west coast. I was able to rediscover the rugged beauty of my homeland and appreciate the simplicity of a lifestyle that brought happiness and care to generations within my family.

However, as I quickly discovered, new protocols had to be followed: I could not just simply arrive on a family member's doorstep and catch up. Emails and phone calls had to be made to ensure that they were comfortable with such a visit. COVID-19 forced me to be more considerate and think of the needs of those I perhaps have taken for granted. Does my old school friend, with a cancer diagnosis, really need a visit from me, when we can reminisce very well over Zoom? My new style summer holiday was certainly very restful as I was able to reconnect with my ancestral home and walk with our donkeys, Millie and Milo.

Weather allowing, even during an Irish summer, the family could be able to sit outside watching the sun set in the western sky over Croagh Patrick at 11pm, as the

children exhausted themselves on the trampoline! Roasting marshmallow s'mores over the firepit made it that bit more special, especially since the younger family members did not have to be in school the following day. If you stayed up long enough enjoying the chat, catch up and sheer delight of being with loved ones, you get to catch a new dawn and start a new day.

The autumnal and winter dark nights allow for a totally different experience, as you can gaze up to the sky and experience the wonder of the Milky Way, so often shielded by light pollution in more populated areas. I never fail to look up to those stars and think of Fr Michael Winstanley

SDB singing, with such emotion, 'Vincent' by Don McClean—Michael's gentle interpretation never fails to move me. Privileged to share the 'starry, starry night', I realised that this cold night sky offers hope and challenge also. McClean wrote his 1972 hit after he had read a biography of the Dutch artist, Vincent Van Gogh. The singer-songwriter was inspired by the evocative 'Starry Night' painted by Van Gogh; it led him to reflect on the gift of his unusual artistic style that still inspires to this day. Sadly, that style that gave us 'Sunflowers', 'The Potato Eaters' and 'The Siesta' was not appreciated during his lifetime. Penniless and prone to deep bouts of depression, he shot himself in July 1890. It is such a pity that this deeply gifted man saw suicide as his

For me, it was returning to the family cottage on Ireland's stunning west coast. I was able to rediscover the rugged beauty of my homeland and appreciate the simplicity of a lifestyle that brought happiness and care to generations within my family.



only way out. His brother, Theo reported his last words, "this sadness will last forever." McClean captured that deep melancholy as he writes in 'Vincent':

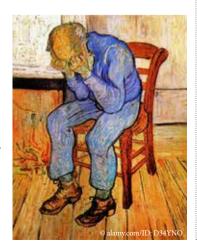
Starry, starry night
Portraits hung in empty halls
Frameless heads on nameless walls
With eyes that watch the world and can't forget.

Like the strangers that you've met
The ragged men in ragged clothes
The silver thorn of bloody rose
Lie crushed and broken on the virgin snow

Now, I think I know what you tried to say to me How you suffered for your sanity How you tried to set them free They would not listen, they're not listening still Perhaps they never will. (Don McLean, 1971)

Looking up to the vastness of the bleak Mayo sky, those stars offered beacons of light and hope. I am especially moved by Van Gogh's 'Sorrowing Old Man (at Heaven's Gate)'. It shows a seated man with his head in his hands—one can almost feel his sense of hopelessness. It was painted shortly before his death while he was in a treatment facility. Critics have long speculated that this was a type of self-portrait, with Van Gogh trying to express his deep inner feelings. It is interesting that this work is also entitled 'Worn Out'. There is no doubt that the events of these past years have left so many of us

feeling worn out. We rightly clapped for the NHS workers on our doorsteps in the height of the pandemic, but it could not make up for their care, dedication, professionalism and service. They are still worn out by the demands of this virusit is incumbent on us all, as fellow travellers, to do all we can to help and support each other in subsequent trying times.



In my walks with Millie and Milo, I learnt a great deal about the need for kindness in our world. These animals followed me, perhaps in the hope of a carrot or polo mint, but they were there, offering very big ears to listen! A cruel world could not see the beauty and originality of Van Gogh—in his despair, suicide was his answer. You will meet so many beautiful people as you move around. To the public eye, they might seem very alive, but behind the smile, there could be suffering and pain that you will never know. It is all too easy to point the finger and condemn. Each of us have had to react to the pandemic and the current economic crisis in our own ways—ways that help to keep us sane and very much alive.

Just down the road from my family home is Meelick Tower, which has been a centre of worship since the Celtic monks founded their monastery on this site in the ninth century. There is something very sacred, and yet ordinary, to stand by the tower which is now at the centre of our parish graveyard. As I stand at my parent's grave, I am connecting with a huge legacy of Christian heritage and memories—how blessed am I? As children, my father dragged us around what seemed to be every burial ground in Ireland 'to pay our respects'. However, it was more than just that; as I grew older, I realised that dad was sharing our family history. At these graves, places of rest, we have an opportunity to remember and link with ancestors, many of whom we never met. In this simple act of remembrance, we were able to join with those gone before us 'marked with the sign of faith' as we pray in the Eucharistic Prayer. As my own parents died, I realised just how important these visits actually are: I was incredibly touched when my good friend Andrew rang, while on a visit to the West, to say that he was at my parents' grave, sharing a little prayer. It is these simple things that connect us to our past and the living history that we share.

In the coming summer months, we will be living through that part of the liturgical year known as 'ordinary time'. However, with the gifts of creation, prophecy, Incarnation and new life through resurrection, can anything, in our Christian life, be seen as 'ordinary' again? We are invited to share in the beauty of the extraordinary in those ordinary events of life. Thomas Merton puts it so well:

At such times, walking down a street, sweeping a floor, washing dishes, hoeing beans, reading a book, taking a stroll in the woods—all can be enriched with



contemplation... This contemplation is all the more pure in that one does not 'look' to see if it is there... It never attracts anybody's attention, least of all the attention of him who lives it. And he soon learns not to want to see anything special in himself. This is the price of his liberty. (Thomas Merton, *The Inner Experience: Notes on Contemplation*, ed. William H. Shannon, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003, p 66).)

It is in these ordinary, everyday experiences that we are invited to find God. Some will go on extravagant pilgrimages or spend time apart, perhaps with a special 'ingroup', in their quest for the almighty. Some will offer up an hour on a Sunday and then will get on with what they see to be important. In your summertime of rest and recreation, I invite you to discover God in everything that you do, as the wise Julian of Norwich reminds us:

The fullness of joy is to behold God in everything. God is the ground, the substance, the teaching, the teacher, the purpose, and the reward for which every soul labours. (Julian, Anchoress at Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* (1373), ed. G. Warwick, (London: Methuen & Company, 1901), 71.)

There is a certain manufacturer of cake that tells us in its advertising campaign that it makes more than just good cakes—it produces exceedingly good cakes. Likewise, a younger and very enthusiastic member of my family tends to see life not just as a 'good' experience, but 'seriously good. We have our heroes in the Church such as Mary, Dominic Savio, Dorothy Day, John Paul II and Oscar Romero. We need these saints as guides and mentors, but, according to another great hero of the Church, Don Bosco, we are all called to sanctity. Without a shadow of doubt, this young lady is a saint and a hero for me: her zest and energy for life is infectious and certainly captures the light of Easter joy in the darkest of times. During lockdown, our patience was tried severely, as we learned to live without going out for work,

school, recreation and worship. As we slowly return to the new normal, we realise that that the experience has helped to shape us: in brokenness, we found resilience and strength. We had to adopt a new way of having to relate to people, especially those who are so close to us, and some are still finding the return to work and social interaction a little intimidating and hard. In your recreation, thank God for the heroes you live with and for all their positive qualities that have, hopefully, shone through, especially in your darkness. Of course, there will be wobbles: those temper tantrums, raised voices, slammed doors and words we should not have used. However, we are a community of reconciliation and so we are invited to forgive. Think of those champions today and always: as an educator, I thank God for those heroes who have been part of my journey. To that endless list of colleagues, students, family and friends I owe a huge 'thank you!' I am sure you have an equally long list—perhaps you could offer a prayer or thought for each one



of them on each of the days of this summertime. Remember their birthdays or feast days in a special way: help them to see just how 'seriously good' they are. We can use these special days to take away the doubt, worries and pain that have could have accumulated over time. The good Lord invites us to share our spirit of generosity as we breath the air of kindness and enjoy the 'seriously good' to the max. I pray that you can see the 'seriously good' in life—being with 'seriously good' people helps, as does having a 'seriously good' attitude.

We have all given up so much over these past years, and I hope that you might get encouragement, support, a listening ear or a hug—even from the strangest of situations. Certainly, at the start of 2020, I never thought two donkeys could offer such support to me! This summer allow the Spirit to take us to new and exciting places. It can be transformative if we allow ourselves to enter that excitement of the ordinary. Pope Francis urges us to use our personal experiences of loss and recovery to show some 'seriously good' love:

Love rejoices in seeing others grow. Hence it suffers when others are anguished, lonely, sick, homeless, despised or in need. Love is a leap of the heart; it brings us out of ourselves and creates bonds of

The call for all of us is to be gentle and please be kind: make your summer be remembered for all the right reasons. My summers, along with autumn, winter and spring, have given me a new appreciation of this wonderful world we share.

sharing and communion.

(Pope Francis, *Message for Lent 2021*, (St John Lateran, Rome, 11 November 2022), n. 3)

The call for all of us is to be gentle and please be kind: make your summer be remembered for all the right reasons. My summers, along with autumn, winter and spring, have given me a new appreciation of this wonderful world we share. Things can seem bleak, and we may well be worn out. The world turns and even COVID-19, an economic recession and the horrors of war cannot stop that onward march towards a shared, hope-filled future. Even darkness has its purpose too, as we are reminded in the musical 'Les Misérables':

Even the darkest night will end, and the sun will rise. *Les Misérables*. 2012. [DVD] Tom Hooper.

Gerry O'Shaughnessy SDB

Developing Eco-Spirituality

co-spirituality is a spiritual practice that allows us to reflect on the natural world, its beauty and God's deep incarnation in the world. In this climate of ecological crisis, it is essential for us to develop eco-spirituality practices that revolve around becoming intimately connected with creation and

understanding ourselves not as lords or rulers over creation but as integral members of its ecology.

One of the key ways in which ecospirituality can grow is through the development of ecological virtues. Ecological virtues allow people to understand their relationship with the land and to behave in a way that shows compassion to our Earth that is crying out in pain. But why don't we focus on the actions which cause the pain in the first place?

The term we could use for these actions is 'ecological sins', the antithesis of ecological virtues.

They are actions or dispositions that disconnect us from creation and add to its pain. Seven ecological virtues (drawn from 'Laudato

Si') is an apt device because people are often familiar with the seven cardinal virtues: chastity, temperance, charity, diligence, kindness, patience and humility.

Pope Francis discusses the virtues that people should endeavour to build within themselves and the attributes to avoid. Some of the ecological sins are similar to, or, virtually identical to the 'deadly sins', but the key difference is that the deadly sins refer to human interactions with each other, whereas these ecological sins relate to our association with creation.

All of these sins ultimately derive from one sin—anthropocentrism, the belief that we, as humans, are gods on this Earth because we are made in His image. To some extent, we must understand that 'original sin' is the sin of anthropocentrism; however, one of the main differences is that, through the act of the resurrection, God came to show us that we always were and always will be forgiven.

God may be able to forgive us for our actions, but nature is governed by the laws of physics and biology and, as we have already seen and continue to see, will not be so forgiving of our actions.

We can only understand the enormity of this false belief of anthropocentrism by breaking it down to its parts. The most challenging part of developing an eco-spirituality is acknowledging sin and asking for forgiveness. Over time, we can then come to repair and reconcile our relationships with one another, the Earth and our God.

Research has shown that those who live privileged lives contribute to a more significant proportion of environmental harm and exploitation; our anthropocentric



dispositions are fuelled by the societal clamouring to have more, and for everything to be more convenient.

Eco-spirituality requires sacrificing our time, our money, our reputations and ego. For example, suppose we want to help reduce the exploitation of workers who are not paid a reasonable wage. Every time we purchase an item of clothing that is cheap because it does not come from a fairtrade source, we send a message that we value the product we purchased and the methods used to create it.

We are also contributing to the pollution caused by the production and disposal of these items. We must then sacrifice by re-wearing, repairing, repurposing, wearing out, handing down and donating our clothing to charity. These actions help us to avoid the sins of exploitation, harm and waste and build the virtues of sobriety, gratitude and care.

Eco-spirituality requires sacrificing our time, our money, our reputations and ego.

Another example is when we choose to reduce the use of our fossil fuel-guzzling cars. When we purchase fuel, we send a message that we value that product and will use it. We are contributing to the exploitation of the Earth and the ongoing harm to the planet, both in the way the fuel is extracted and the emissions it produces.

When we choose to ride a bike, take public transport, walk, or at least carshare, we reduce the harm done to the planet. We, therefore, are caring for creation.

When we spend too much time on our screens and locked indoors, we continue to disassociate ourselves from creation. We fail to sit in awe and wonder of God's work, praising His name.



© Louis Maniquet on Unsplash

When we plant a monoculture lawn at the front of our house as a symbol of status and tear out our native species to create perfectly manicured gardens, we prohibit the natural world's ability to praise God.

When we spend time in awe and wonder, regenerate the Earth and allow our native species to thrive, we enable all organisms to worship God.

These actions that aim to overcome sin require purposeful reflection on our intimate connection with creation. The act of reflecting and discerning our behaviours helps us to build an eco-spirituality.

If there was ever a time when we needed to make selfless sacrifices for the Earth, it is now amid ecological crises. Through sacrifice, we see the world differently, in a way that is more intimately connected with the Earth.

The seven proposed ecological sins are:

Disassociation from ourselves, from creation and God: Misunderstanding our integral part in creation and positioning screens between

ourselves and our loved ones.

Exploitation: Deliberately destroying and wreaking havoc on our ecosystems to rape and plunder our Earth's resources for economic gain.

Harm: Ignoring the cries of the Earth in a way that is not deliberate. It disrespects God as creator and damages our relationship with Him.

Inequality: Being selfish about our needs and wants contributes to global inequality and sin, and directly relates to how we treat our brothers and sisters.

Waste: Being wasteful of the gifts of creation that have been given to us, as servants to the 'throwaway culture' that plagues contemporary society.

Greed: We need to be acutely aware that greed leads to other ecological sins.

Arrogance: Misunderstanding and failing to see the incarnation of God in our world.

Alice Carwardine

With thanks to the Salesian Bulletin of Australia

The Last Supper

MONIKA ARNOLD

esus wants to go to Jerusalem for Passover. Knowing that he has to say goodbye to his friends there, he prepares a very special feast.

This mini picture book tells the biblical story of the entry into Jerusalem, the anointing in Bethany and the betrayal by Judas. We experience the preparations for the Passover meal, how Jesus washes his friends' feet and how they eat together one last time. And then Jesus is arrested, interrogated and finally killed. The friends are very frightened and sad, until they meet a mysterious man at the lake.

Imagine their surprise and delight when they discovered that they know him...

Monika Arnold has taken the familiar Gospel story and brought it to life for young children. Accompanied by beautiful illustrations by Petra Lefin, this book is ideal to read to your little ones, or to help emerging readers. The rounded corners make the book easy for small hands to handle too.

This book offers a wonderful way to help young children understand that when Jesus shared bread and wine with his friends, he was inviting them to remember that he gave his body for

the sins of humanity. We need God's grace in our spiritual nourishment just as much as we do physical food, which sustains us bodily existence. Recommended for ages 3 to 8.

Sarah Seddon



Affairs of the Heart 3

When the well runs dry

Following the 400th anniversary since the death of St Francis de Sales in 1622 at Lyon, we return to the article by Rev Dr Eunan McDonnell SDB, Provincial of Ireland and expert in the field of St Francis. This third part concludes Fr Eunan's exploration of the saint who inspired Don Bosco.



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he experience of aridity or spiritual dryness in prayer is the inevitable experience of those who have become accustomed to praying regularly. Often, the lack of feeling in prayer may be misinterpreted as a sign that we are no longer praying or we may be even tempted to give up prayer. St Francis writes: "Don't waste time during prayer trying to

understand exactly what you are doing or how you are praying; for the best prayer is that which keeps us so occupied with God that we don't think about ourselves or about what we are doing... don't be like the bride who entertains herself by looking at her engagement ring without even seeing the husband who gave it to her."

Yet, it needs to be explained to the person praying that this dryness is a normal phenomenon in the journey

of prayer. It is calling for a deeper reliance on faith that God is working away in the darkness, and the lack of feeling is not to be taken as the gauge of prayer. It is a movement from the senses to the spirit where the sensory part of the person (sensory gratification) is starting to dry up and the soul's riches are being transferred to the spirit. Rather than being an indication of diminishing prayer, this experience is an indication that God is becoming more the agent and the person more the receiver. It indicates a greater purity of prayer because our prayer is no longer dictated by what we get out of it as we seek "the God of

consolations and not the consolations of God."²

St Francis's description of St Jane's experience of aridity in prayer through his parable of the deaf musician is a good example.³ He reminds her that she is like a deaf musician who has been hired to play music for the king. The musician takes delight when seeing how the king enjoys her music, but when the king is absent, she is required to continue playing although she cannot hear it herself nor see the king's reactions. This moves the person praying deeper along the journey towards *Pure Love*.

What is required at this point of transition as the person's praying becomes more passive, and God's action works away in the darkness, is the inculcation of interior attitudes and dispositions of heart that can help us to receive the gift of prayer: namely, faith, trust, fidelity and perseverance.4 Commenting on the necessity of perseverance, René Voillaume observes that the only recommendation that Jesus makes regarding prayer is 'perseverance'. Our focus must not be on what we are feeling or not feeling on our experience during prayer, because if so, we have stopped praying and become caught up in ourselves. "If we seek our own satisfaction, we will abandon prayer as soon as it becomes too difficult, or when we feel dryness or discontent... we must believe that we shall be heard, but it is only very seldom that we can have evidence of this." Love profits from feelings as well as dryness, from inspirations as well as aridity, from virtue as well as sin. As St Francis de Sales reminds us, even when we feel nothing and are in a state of aridity, we can still exclaim: "Lord, I am no more than a dry log, set me afire." We often complain that God does not hear us or we may mistakenly believe that we are talking to ourselves! Yet, the truth of the matter is that the



© Ashley Batz on Unsplash

problem lies not with God, but with us. "Too often our hearts are set for transmission only, and incoming calls are not received."

Prayer and Life

For St Francis, prayer and life are one, much like how breathing out follows breathing in. We breathe in the love of God through prayer (affective love)and breathe out love in serving our neighbour (effective love).8 Genuine prayer quite naturally leads to selfless service, igniting a love that is true charity. Just like any human relationship, through prayer, we are transformed and shaped by God with whom we are communicating. "Prayer stretches us beyond our limits of loving and, in so doing, transforms us ever more into the likeness of Jesus, by uniting us with him." This explains why prayer is essential on the Salesian spiritual journey of letting 'Jesus live' in us. Through prayer, we are transformed in God through love, assuming the heart of Christ so that we can respond to life situations with the love and compassion of Christ. In Salesian terminology, this ecstatic movement out of ourselves in love of others is called the *ecstasy of action*.

A Communion of Hearts

The call to prayer draws us into the Heart of God in communion with

others because God is the 'great Uniter.'10 Writing to his anam chara, Jane de Chantal, he declares, "It is true, my dear daughter, our unity is utterly consecrated to the highest unity and each day I sense more vividly the truth of our sincere connection which will not let me ever forget you even long, long after I have forgotten myself in order to better attach myself to the Cross."11 In the Salesian view of Trinitarian love, it appears that it is the role of "the Spirit of Love, uniter of hearts" to draw us into communion with God and each other.¹² The vision is almost Balthasarian in its expression, as through the mediation of the Heart of Christ our hearts are returned together to the Father: "For my work must be perfected in you and it will be brought to term only when my Heart beats in yours, only when all hearts, now submissive and docile, beat for the Father together in my Heart."13

It is in the sacraments, in particular, that we are graced with this encounter with the heart of Christ who draws us into unity. However, "without a prayer life, the sacraments would have a limited effect. The sacraments confer grace but their effects are stunted because they do not find 'good soil' in which to take root." Like prayer, the sacraments, from a Salesian perspective, are to be understood in terms of an interaction of hearts. Influenced by Génébrard, the

² OEA V:142.

³ OEA V:137–38.

⁴ "Blessed are those who, with a noble and generous heart, take the word of God to themselves and yield a harvest through their perseverance." Lk.8:15; "Patience brings perseverance, and perseverance brings hope, and this hope is not deceptive, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given us." Rom.5:5.

René Voillaume, Brothers of Men (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966), 94–5.

⁶ Jacques Philippe, Time For God (London: St Paul's, 2005), 21.

⁷ Eugene Mc Caffrey, *Patterns Of Prayer* (N.Y.Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2003), 29.

⁸ OEA IV:301-02.

Aloysius Rego, Holiness for all: Themes from St Thérèse of Lisieux (Oxford: Teresian Press, 2009), 100.

¹⁰ Letter to Jane Frances de Chantal, 25 December 1613, OEA XVI:121.

¹¹ OEA XIII:295.

¹² Sa Vie et ses oeuvres, Tome II, Entretiens, 478, cited in, W.M. Wright, Bond of Perfection: Jeanne de Chantal and François de Sales (New York, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1985), 140–41.

¹³ Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Heart of the World* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1979), 81.

¹⁴ Philippe, Time for God, 27.

sacraments are not to be understood merely as external rites devoid of all warmth and feeling. On the contrary, as Pocetto points out, St Francis "conceives of them as the dynamic and affectionate actions of Christ in his Church. He compares them to a loving embrace that Christ gives to his spouse when interpreting verse 2:6 of the *Canticle*: his left arm is under my head and his right embraces me." ¹⁵

If we return to our mantra of 'I love you too', we could understand baptism as God pouring his love into our hearts. Through the gift of the Spirit, God is not only saying 'I love you', but sharing his very life, his love, his Spirit with us, so that we can participate in his Son's life and become his beloved child. So baptism is God saying 'I love you', and is also our response, it is our acknowledgement of what God is doing. In short, by receiving the gift of baptism we are responding to God, saying, 'I love you too'.

Is it not the same with the Eucharist? In this most blessed sacrament, Christ not only says 'I love you', but shows the depth of this love by giving himself to us as our spiritual nourishment. He enters into communion with us and invites us to respond with our 'amen'. By so doing, are we not also saying 'I love you too'? Just as God gives Himself to us, so too, we give ourselves to God. As St John Paul II reminds us: "We can say not only that each of us receives Christ, but also that Christ receives each of us. He enters into friendship with us: 'You are my friends' (Jn 15:14)."¹⁶

Yet again, in the sacrament of Reconciliation, the Lord washes us clean, reconciles us with his Father, and brings us into the Father's embrace, saying, 'I love you'. Our response in confession is to accept this forgiving love, saying 'I love you too'. It is a recognition of our dependency on God's grace to be faithful, always

remembering that we are saying this from the position of being embraced by the Father.

Let us conclude our exploration with the irenic words of St Francis who recapitulates our understanding of prayer as follows: 'To sum up, the pleasure we take in anything is a precursor that places in the lover's heart the qualities of the thing that pleases. Hence holy complacence transforms us into God, whom we love, and the greater the complacence, the more perfect the transformation. Thus having great love, the saints are very quickly and perfectly transformed, since love transports and translates the manners and dispositions of one heart into another."17

The idea of transformation into Christ, therefore, while being uniquely personal¹⁸ is also radically communitarian. St Francis highlights this communitarian dimension, for since each person is made in the image and likeness of God, "together



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we represent one same portrait which is God."¹⁹ Here, we enter into what Lajeunie describes as Salesian "cosmic Christocentrism".²⁰ The summit of creation, therefore, is the communion of all persons in love with one another and with God.

The Kiss of God

Prayer, understood as heart to heart, is at the epicentre of this work of transfiguration because our true life is hidden in the Son who returns our hearts to the Father. It is the fulfilment of the great priestly prayer of Christ that all may be one. 21 This is only made possible because in Christ the divine and human heart unite. This union of hearts, between God and humanity, is consistently symbolised throughout the Treatise by the image of a kiss.²² It is through this kiss that God draws us to Himself and this union will be fully consummated in heaven. We can, however, receive presentiments of this 'nuptial kiss' in the present world, because God has invited us to participate in his divine friendship.²³ The union of our hearts with God in prayer²⁴ is, thus, expressed through meditation where we seek to "warm our hearts with heavenly love",25 and through prayers of aspirations that unite us to God in the midst of our activities.²⁶ However, it is through contemplation that we enjoy the presence of God in the depths of our heart.²⁷ And yet, "the devout heart has no less love when it turns to external duties than when it prays".28 Such a perspective, drawn from the Song of Songs, can only express the story between God's heart and the human heart as a "love story".29 It is the story of God's seeking out His lost love, "the highest possible romance".30 We cannot understand prayer without understanding love and romance. It is God who is seeking us, and prayer is our response to being courted by God.

¹⁵ Alexander T. Pocetto, 'Compassionate love and Salesian Spirituality', at www.franz-von-sales.de/icss_de /artikel/english/pocetto01.pdf. accessed 12/12/2016.

¹⁶ Ecclesia De Eucharistia, n.22.

¹⁷ OEA V:61

¹⁸ In the *Treatise*, bk.2, chap.7, St Francis indicates that as a personal intimate relationship with God, grace is unique. Each person receives a personal individual grace. Grace has such a unique quality that no two persons are alike.

¹⁹ OEA X:270

²⁰ E.M. Lajeunie, Saint Francis de Sales. The Man, the Thinker, His Influence. Vol. 2. Trans. by Rory O'Sullivan (Bangalore: SFS Publications, 1987), 159.

²¹ "I pray that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me." Jn.17: 21.

²² OĒA ÍV:51–52; 188–9; OĒĀ V:293.

²³ OEA V:293.

²⁴ OEA V:5; 8; 9; 10.

²⁵ OEA IV:307; OEA IV:308; 311; OEA IV:313; OEA IV:314; 327.

²⁶ OEA V:19; 336; 274; OEA IX:70-71; 469; OEA XIV:78; OEA XV:269.

²⁷ OEA IV:327; 329; OEA V:9; 42; 78.

²⁸ OEA V:328.

²⁹ Deus Caritas Est, n.10

³⁰ 'The Future of Love: A reading of Pope Benedict's Deus Caritas Est' in, John Milbank, The Future of Love: Essays in Political Theology (USA: Cascade Books, 2009), 366.

OBITUARY FOR

Fr Daniel Donohoe SDB



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aniel Michael Joseph was born on May 8, 1935, in **Dunsany, County Meath,** Ireland, to Rose and Daniel Donohoe, the fifth child in a family of three sons and three daughters. They moved to Knockmark, near Drumree and very close to the Warrenstown Agricultural College (now Coláiste na bhFiann), so it is not surprising that he found out about the Salesians from an early age. He attended the Culmullen National School until he was fourteen years old, and received a very positive reference from the Principal:

"I can state with confidence that he is a boy of more than average intelligence. I can also recommend him as a diligent, trustworthy boy, anxious to assimilate knowledge. He seems to have a vocation, and his keenness will, I am sure, ensure his ultimate success."

He entered the Salesian school in Pallaskenry, Limerick, on October 9, 1949 and studied there as an aspirant until the age of nineteen.

In August 1954 Daniel went to England, to the Salesian Novitiate in Burwash, East Sussex, and made his first profession on September 8, 1955. He spent three years as a philosophy student, first at Ingersley Hall, Cheshire, and then in Beckford, Worcestershire. He then taught in Beckford for two years and for a further year in Blaisdon, Gloucestershire.

In 1961 he began his study of theology at Melchet Court near Romsey, Hampshire. Unfortunately, the building was seriously damaged by fire and in 1962 he was sent to Turin to continue his studies at the Crocetta Salesian International Institute. There he was ordained to the priesthood on February 11, 1965.

Fr Dan taught in Cowley and Pallaskenry, where he was also catechist. He was then sent to the Salesian Missionary College in Shrigley, becoming headmaster in 1971. Fr Dan was an excellent teacher but was also prepared to take on the most menial of tasks. He spent many hours with his sleeves rolled up, working in the grounds. This also gave him an opportunity to involve some of the boys who responded well to his patient accompaniment.

In 1974, he was transferred to Battersea where he attended St Mary's College, Strawberry Hill, and received a Bachelor of Education degree in 1976. This led to the major part of his teaching career at Salesian College, Battersea. He became head of religious education in 1982 and continued teaching there until his retirement in 1997. He was also catechist in the community.

Fr Dan maintained his links with Ireland, serving as president of the Meath Association of London for a period. In 1984, while home on holiday, he celebrated a Mass commemorating the centenary of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) on the Gaelic football pitch in Drumree (permission having been obtained from the bishop).

In 1998, after a year's sabbatical, Fr Dan embarked on a second career in Salesian parish ministry. He began at St Anne's in Chertsey and although he was there for only three years, he left a lasting impression as curate, chaplain to the local Catholic primary school, and vice rector in the community.

In 2001, Fr Dan moved to Farnborough, as parish priest in the newly built Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Church. Again, he was greatly loved for his well-prepared homilies, his readiness for hard work and his concern for the parishioners. He was a governor at St Patrick's primary school and celebrated Mass for them, both in the parish church and in the school.

In 2015, at the age of eighty, Fr Dan reluctantly retired from full-time parish ministry and moved from the parish house to a room in St John Bosco House. Characteristically, he refused any 'fuss', but the pupils from St Patrick's presented him with a 'leaver's

certificate' and led the singing of 'Danny Boy'. On October 19, 2015 there was a more formal farewell from the parish with a meal in the Salesian College hall, attended by over 200 parishioners.

He continued to serve the Farnborough community as vice rector and sacristan, always ready to assist with funerals and the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the local parish, concelebrating at Masses in the College and helping with supplies in other parishes in the area. The community in Chertsey often invited him to their evenings of recollection so that he could hear confessions. He also found time to take part in pilgrimages to Medjugorje, Fatima and Rome.

Things became more difficult for Fr Dan in 2019 when he began to suffer from various medical conditions, involving stays in hospital and operations. Most frustrating was a reduction of function in his wrists, making it difficult to hold and lift objects. The following year he was also treated for heart problems. Despite these, he continued with supplies and other ministry as far as he could.

In March 2022, Fr Dan, in common with the rest of the Farnborough community, contracted the COVID virus. At first, he appeared to make a good recovery, but he began to experience increasing breathlessness. On July 4, he was taken to hospital and tests revealed further problems with his heart. He returned from hospital on July 27, but continued to feel tired and breathless. By August 20, his condition warranted a return to hospital, where he died, sooner than expected, two days later, on the Feast of Our Lady, Mother and Queen.

Messages of condolence reflected Fr Dan's special qualities: 'a great worker for the kingdom'; 'a wonderful confessor, and generous and devoted Salesian'; 'exceptionally kind'; 'a good friend'; 'always a tremendous support... a wonderful example to all of us'; 'universally regarded as honourable and trustworthy'; 'a role model as a Salesian priest'; 'a lovely man'.

The funeral Mass was celebrated in Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Church on September 15, the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, with Fr Gerry Briody, our Provincial, presiding. Relatives from England and Ireland were present, with many parishioners from Farnborough and Chertsey, past pupils from Battersea and Salesians from other houses. He was laid to rest in Ship Lane cemetery with those Salesians who had gone to the Lord before him. May he rest in peace!

Fr Patrick Sherlock SDB

OBITUARY FOR

Fr Des O'Riordan SDB



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aniel Joseph O'Riordan was born in Dublin on October 4, 1938 and baptised two days later at St Mary's Church, Haddington Road. His parents, Daniel and Margaret, farmed fifty acres of land in Woodtown, County Meath, but they had previously lived in Cork and Wicklow. Their son, usually known as Des, one of two brothers and two sisters. attended Culmullen National School between the ages of eleven and fourteen. He then applied to go to the Salesian aspirantate in Pallaskenry, county Limerick. The reference from his parish priest in **Dunshaughlin describes him** as "a very good and intelligent boy" who would be "a suitable candidate for the priesthood".

In 1957, after five years of secondary education at Pallaskenry, Des went to England, to the Salesian Novitiate in Burwash, Sussex. He made his first profession there on September 8, 1958 and then went to Beckford for three years of philosophy. He spent two years teaching, one at Shrigley and one at Ballinakill in Ireland. For his theological studies he was sent to Bollengo, north of Turin in the foothills of the Alps. Here, he developed his love for Italian culture. Now qualified with a Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology, he returned to Ireland for his priestly ordination at Warrenstown on June 29, 1968.

Fr Des spent the next three years in Malta as catechist. He then attended St Mary's College, Strawberry Hill, gaining a Certificate in Education, and returned to Malta for a further two years as a teacher. In later life, he enjoyed visiting Malta when he was free to do so.

In 1974, Fr Des began his longest placement as a member staff at Salesian College Battersea, teaching English and then serving as deputy head, for a total of twenty-five years. During these years he also gained a Bachelor of Arts degree through part-time study with the Open University. He served as rector from 2001 to 2007 and continued as bursar for a further two years.

While head of lower school, Fr Des made a point of visiting the families of all the new intake of pupils to form a better idea of their circumstances. This involved many miles of travel around London on his moped. He also organised a regular and very popular trip to Ireland.

Fr Des was an enthusiastic traveller. He regularly visited his family and friends in England and Ireland. He made seventeen pilgrimages to Fatima. During the summer months he often went to the USA to visit one of his sisters and to supply in parishes there—he claimed to have crossed the Atlantic ninety-six times! He also had friends in Prague whom he visited from time to time.

Among his other interests, Fr Des was an active member of the Meath Association in London and served as president for several years. He was chair of trustees of the Little Way Association, funding missionary projects around the world. He was also a keen supporter of the Battersea Salesian Old Boys Association.

In 2009, Fr Des moved to Farnborough as rector, and was reappointed for two further three-year terms. During this time, he was a foundation governor of the Salesian College and chair of the ethos committee. He was very active in priestly ministry, celebrating Masses in the College and other schools and supplying in various parishes. He kept up his work with the Little Way Association and in November 2013 he spent two weeks in Tamil Nadu, India, visiting projects funded by the charity, including several Salesian works.

On October 6, 2018, there was a Mass in the College Chapel and a splendid meal to celebrate his 80th birthday, his Diamond Jubilee of religious profession, his Golden Jubilee of Ordination and his nine years as rector in Farnborough. After so many years of responsibility and leadership, he liked to recall an Irish Salesian who had teased his former rector with the words, "You're nothing now!"

Over the next few years Fr Des's health deteriorated, but he continued as far as possible with his usual activities. These included helping the bursar by dealing with the community bank statements and keeping contact with his friends. The escalation of the COVID pandemic in 2020 brought extra frustrations, as each of his hospital appointments and operations entailed a period of isolation in his room. On September 29, 2021, he made the move from Valdocco House to St John Bosco House, where he would not have to negotiate stairs and where help was more readily available if needed.

In March 2022, in common with all members of the Farnborough community, Fr Des contracted COVID. After testing negative, he remained unwell. On March 31, he was taken to Frimley Park Hospital for tests and was admitted to a ward. On May 3, he was transferred to a nursing home in Church Crookham. His condition did not improve and on June 2, he was taken by ambulance to St Augustine's Home, Addlestone, run by the Sisters Hospitallers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Although this was further away from Farnborough, members of the community continued to visit him, and he also received visits from the Salesians in Chertsey.

On June 19, the Feast of Corpus Christi, Fr Des was reported to be sinking fast. Members of the community visited him and administered the Sacrament of the Sick for the final time. He died later that evening, supported by the prayers of his niece and the Sisters. May he rest in peace!

Messages of condolence soon arrived: 'always very fond of Des,' 'so many happy memories of his care and sense of fun,' 'always very supportive, encouraging and kind.' 'After all the pain and discomfort, he has had to live with over so many weeks, it is good to know that he is now at peace with his risen Lord.'

The funeral took place on July 10, 2022, at Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Church. Among the mourners were members of his family from Ireland and England, Salesians from various houses, Salesian old boys from Battersea and many of the good friends he had made over the years.

Fr Patrick Sherlock SDB

