



A Newsletter from the Missions Office/Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States  
Catholic Diocese of Columbus, Ohio

## *Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus...*

### *To monthly mission donors: Thank you for your support!*

On behalf of His Excellency Robert Brennan, the Bishop of Columbus, and Very Rev. Father Andrew Small, OMI, the National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States, I would like to thank you for your prayers, sacrifices and financial support for the missions.

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May is the month of Mary. In the Philippines, we have a beautiful tradition called “Flores De Mayo” which means, “May flowers”. Or, “Flowers of May”. During the month of May, in the late afternoon, children bring baskets of flowers to church. They pray and sing hymns to Mary and listen to reflections on the Blessed Mother of God. The ceremony concludes with a Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

Saint John Bosco is among the many saints who had special devotion to the Blessed Mother. For Don Bosco, Mary was more than an object of veneration. Mary was for him, a living person. He felt her presence in every moment of his life. He emulated her the virtue of sensitivity, her obedience to the will of God, and her commitment and fidelity at the hour of the cross. From the very beginning of his life, Mary showed him the way; inspired his actions, sustained his

strength, and helped him achieve his goals, even in extra ordinary ways.

On the occasion of his investiture, his mother told him, “When you were born I consecrated you to the Blessed Mother. If you become a priest, always promote the devotion to Mary”. John, after listening to his mother, in tears thanked his mother and said, “These words will not be said for nothing. I will treasure them all my life”.

Don Bosco’s first encounter with Mary happened in a dream at the age of nine. It was Jesus, Himself, who tells him that Mary is to be his guide: “I will give you a teacher. Under her guidance, you will become wise. Without her, all wisdom is foolishness”. At this juncture, Don Bosco narrates, “At that moment, I saw a Lady standing near Jesus ... she took me kindly by the hand and she said, ‘This is the field of your work. Make yourself humble, strong and robust ... What you see happening to these animals is what you must do to my children’ (the animals then turned into lambs). “At that point, I began to cry. I begged the Lady to speak so I could understand. She placed her hand on my head and said, ‘In good time, you will understand everything”.

I learned from Saint John Bosco to entrust my whole life to the loving protection of our Blessed Mother. When I was a Salesian

novice in the Philippines in 1958, my mother gave me a golden ring, which had been passed on to her, from several generations before her. At the Novitiate, I discovered that I was not allowed to possess the ring as prescribed in the vow of poverty. I had either to send it back to my mother, or to give the ring to the Salesian Society. I asked the Blessed Mother what to do with it.

One afternoon while praying the Rosary at the Novitiate Grotto, I looked up at the statue of Mary and I saw a small cavity at the foot of the statue. Bingo! I knew what to do. I went to my room, wrote a letter to Mary, wrapped the ring with the letter, placed the letter with the ring in the cavity and sealed the cavity with cement. In the letter, I asked the Blessed Mother to take care of the ring and of me. Before my earthly mother died, I forgot to tell her what I did with her ring. But I know that in heaven she is pleased with what I did with it.

That was more than six decades ago. I do not know what happened to the letter and to the ring. But I know I have always felt the Blessed Mother’s love and protection through the years. Whenever things go south, or whenever I find myself in the dark valleys of life, I allow the Blessed Mother to hug and embrace me. I always feel her presence, *now*, and hopefully, *at the hour of my death*.

## ***Some fragments from Pope Francis' "Christus Vivit"***

(Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation)

Introduction:

- Christ is alive. He is our hope. He brings youth to our world. Everything Christ touches becomes young, new and full of life. He wants us to be alive.
- Christ is in us. He is with us and He will never abandon us. However we may wander, Christ is always there. He calls us and awaits our return to Him and start all over again.
- When we feel we are growing old out of sorrow, resentment or fear, doubt or failure, He will always be there to restore our strength and our hope.

Chapter I

- Young hearts are naturally ready to change, to turn back, get up and learn from life. Jesus praises the young sinner who returned to the right path over the brother who considered himself faithful, yet lacked the spirit of love and mercy.
- Jesus wants to give us hearts that are ever young. He asks us to cast out the old leaven that we may become fresh dough; to strip ourselves of the "old self" and to put on "a young self".
- True youth means having a heart capable of loving, whereas everything that separate us from others makes our soul grow old.
- Clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.
- Jesus has no use for adults who look down on the young. He insisted that the greatest among us become like the youngest. For Him age did

not establish privileges, and being young did not imply lesser worth or dignity.

- Parents should not provoke their children, lest they become discouraged. Young people are not meant to become discouraged; they are meant to dream great things, to seek vast horizons, to aim higher, to take on the world, to accept challenges and to offer the best of themselves to the building of something better.
- Young people are urged to accept the authority of those who are older. Profound respect must be shown to the elderly since they have the wealth of experience – they have known success and failure, life's joys and afflictions, dreams and disappointments.
- It is unhelpful to buy into the cult to dismiss others simply because they are older or from another generation. Jesus tells us that the wise are able to bring forth from their store things both new and old. A wise young person is open to the future, yet still capable of learning something from the experience of others.
- We should never repent of spending our youth being good, opening our heart to the Lord, and living differently. None of this takes away from our youth but instead strengthens and renews it. Our youth is renewed like the eagles. For this reason, Saint Augustine lamented, "Late have I known you, beauty ever ancient, ever new".
- We can spend our youth skimming the surface of life, or aspiring to beautiful and good things, and thus store up a future full of life and interior richness.

- If you have lost your inner vitality, your dreams or enthusiasm, Jesus stands before you as once He stood before the dead son of the widow and with all power of His resurrection, urges you, "Young man, I say to you, arise!"

## ***Pope Francis' May Prayer Intention:***

That the Church in Africa, through the commitment of its members, may be the seed of unity among her peoples and a sign of hope for this continent.

## ***A joke a priest can tell... LOL!***

Shortly after a British flight has reached its cruising altitude, the captain announced.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this is your captain. Welcome to flight 293, non-stop from London Heathrow to New York. The weather ahead is good, so we should have an uneventful flight. So, sit back, relax, and ... "OH! MY GOD!"

Complete silence followed! Some minutes later, the captain came back on the intercom.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I'm sorry if I scared you. While I was talking to you, a flight attendant accidentally spilled coffee in my lap. You should see the front of my pants!"

From the back of the plane, an Irish passenger yelled "For the luvva Jaysus, you should see the back of mine!"

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