MARY INVITES US TO BE BEARERS OF THE GOSPEL, MEN AND WOMEN OF HOPE

We have started a new liturgical year and we are preparing to celebrate the feast of Christmas. Living the mystery of Christmas means understanding the meaning of life. In today’s society many people are confused and wander around aimlessly. Today it is easy to be deceived and to go astray, taking wrong turns or living in situations of suffering and slavery from which we cannot escape. Our Lady, carrying the Son of God in her womb with ineffable love and giving him to mankind in the silence of the night of Christmas, teaches us that only through prayer can we understand who we are and where we are going. In prayer we find the light and strength we need to be witnesses, bringing the light, hope and love of the Gospel to those who have lost their way. Our Lady wants to save all her children, but she can do so only with us and through us, through our prayer and openness to God’s will. Mary Help of Christians is close to us and accompanies us day by day, always interceding for us. With Mary, in the silence of prayer and meditation, we journey towards Christmas and prepare our hearts to be a fitting cradle where the Child Jesus can lie.

In this spirit we pray that Mary from her home may renew our homes, as the programme of our Association invites us to do in preparation for the Seventh International Congress of Mary Help of Christians. We invite all groups to share the formative programme proposed every month through ADMAonline and to avail of every opportunity to participate in this great event for the Salesian Family during the bicentenary of the birth of our father and founder Don Bosco. All the necessary information is available on the website: http://www.congressomariaausiliatrice2015.org. For further help or clarification write to: congresso@admadonbosco.org.

We thank Mary Help of Christians for the many signs of renewal of our Association, for all the dedicated people who undertake to live the spirit and mission of ADMA. In this issue, in the news section, you will find many good news stories and interesting experiences that show the vitality of the Association and urge us to greater commitment and sharing.

We wish all our members and groups, especially those who live in situations of trial and suffering, that the grace of Christmas may bring peace and joy. May the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph bless and guard the sanctity and peace of our homes and our families. Happy Christmas and a fruitful 2015, the year of the Bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco and of the institution of the liturgical feast of Mary Help of Christians.

Mr Lucca Tullio, President
Fr Pierluigi Cameroni SDB, Spiritual Animator
The church, as the term itself indicates, (“ecclesia” means calling, invitation, convocation, from the Greek ek-kaleo, meaning “call from”), is the place where we gather as the family of God and learn to be family, the place where familiarity with God is revealed as the foundation and fulfillment, healing and maturation of our family relationships. The houses of Mary, in particular, perform this mission well, because that is where the Mother is, the one who gave birth to the Son of God and taught him to be human. She now teaches us humans to live as children of God. She performs this task well because she is full of grace and mediatrix of grace. She is the first and highest of all creatures. She is present in the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word as a mother, she is the first of all created beings. She is the Immaculate Mother of Sorrows, and the mystical dawn of Redemption; Assumed into heaven at the right hand of her Son, she is the glorious woman, model and goal of the Church. Therefore, as once she was the paradise of God on earth, she is now the Queen of Heaven. She lives in total familiarity with God and with mankind. She teaches us how to enter into familiarity with God in a way no other mother could.

Continuing our journey “from the house of Mary to our homes,” as soon as we come to the school of the Gospel, our mind goes to the place where God’s “yes” to mankind and mankind’s “yes” to God were spoken in unison for the first time, creating the new and everlasting covenant of love between God and mankind that is at the heart of the desire and design of God. From there the mind goes to the silence and humility of the family of Nazareth, where the good news was announced to Mary and where Jesus was brought up. Then it goes to Bethlehem where, to the amazement of the angels, the shepherds and the wise men, the Son of God was welcomed as a son of man in the care of Mary and the custody of Joseph. Next it goes to the temple of Jerusalem, where Jesus’ parents experienced in a new way the mystery of the Son, whose roots are not only found in the house of David and in Mary’s womb, but also in heaven, in the heart of the Father.

But perhaps the episode that exemplifies best the worship of God as a school of humanity is the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple (Lk 2,22-40). There light is shed on the mystery of the family. We see the intertwining of generations and vocations, where human words and gestures mingle with the sacred rites and the divine prophecies. Together they realize the heavenly plan of our earthly life. There we see the Son with his parents and ancestors, presented as a young family to the priests and there we meet two consecrated persons, a man and a woman, each with their specific vocation. We witness there a pilgrimage, a journey, at the centre of which there is an offering and a sacrifice. Mary and Joseph took Jesus to Jerusalem, to present him in the Temple and they return to Nazareth, where “the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favour of God was upon him” (v. 40). Here we learn that the fruit of sacrifice, the central act of worship and the heart of family ties, is happiness and fruitfulness. When we offer ourselves to God, God offers himself to us. When we present to God all that we recognize as belonging to him, he pays us back with the gift of his Son, enabling us to make our lives a sacrifice pleasing to him.

We will come back again and again with different perspectives to this Gospel story which is so rich and fascinating. The journey of grace that is realized in the pilgrimage of the Holy Family of Nazareth to Jerusalem and back gives us the opportunity to reflect on the first rule of the bonds of love in church and family. They are always a communion of persons, a unity of differences, a mutual but unequal enrichment. It is worth emphasizing this because our culture sees man or woman only as an individual. It confuses freedom...
and arbitrariness, and confuses nature with spontaneity, under the pretext of parity and equality. It devalues every religious constraint (of its nature vertical) and weakens all family ties (which are differentiated by nature). We must therefore make it clear that all people have the same dignity, but this does not mean that they are the same in terms of equality and parity. These are abstract and formal concepts, incapable of honouring the wonderful variety and originality of the human person created by God and for God. This means that no form of love and no level of dialogue are helped by overlooking and denying the differences. The originality of different peoples cannot be lost in globalization. Not every bond of affection can be called “family”. Man and woman are not interchangeable but complementary, and what is masculine or feminine is not the object of choice or preference, but a gift to be welcomed and shared.

The crisis regarding family values is not only moral, but anthropological. It concerns not only human behaviour but the very vision of the human person. Pope Francis said with simplicity, clarity and force: “the family is an anthropological fact. We cannot qualify it with concepts of an ideological nature, which prevail at a particular moment of history and then disappear. We cannot speak of a conservative family or a progressive family: the family is family!” It must return to being, as the Cardinals said in the Synod of the family, the “first school of humanity”, the “school of love” and “school of communion”, “the place where relationships are learned” where young people learn to build meaningful relationships that will help the development of the person and his or her capacity for self-giving. “It is the irreplaceable forum” as Pope Francis says in the Apostolic Letter Evangelii Gaudium “where we learn to live with difference and to belong to others.” We need to rediscover the meaning of differences be they sexual, family or cultural, and to understand what is involved in giving and receiving. We need to know what is holy and noble and what is miserable and abject, what is unnatural, natural or supernatural. We need above all, in the light of the Word, to give value to all that corresponds to the “yes” of Jesus and Mary: “obedience of faith”, “submission” to God and his Law, docility to whoever precedes us or presides over us in his name. Here is the heart of true freedom! Most of all, it is crucial to internalize the profound logic of the Gospel: that the Lord has become a Servant, that Life comes from his death, that the great become small and that true greatness belongs to the little ones, that life is saved by losing it and that giving one’s life is the way to find it.

The scene of the Presentation in the Temple serves as a model for us for many reasons. We mention just some of them.

When the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses - The action of Mary and Joseph is driven by the desire to fulfill the Law of God. Luke repeats this several times. The Holy Family submitted to the Law! As Congar says, this applies especially to the Mother: “Mary is purified. Even though she is the pearl and the glory of Israel, she submits humbly to the law of the Temple, which is devoid of the ark of testimony, while she herself is the temple of the Holy Spirit, the Ark of the New Covenant.” And if Mary observes the Law, it is because Jesus also observes it. He is redeemed in accordance with the law of Moses, yet he is the Redeemer, not only of Israel but of the world. He is presented in the Temple even though he is greater than the Temple. He is the one who sanctifies the temple and every offering to be made to God.” Joseph, for his part, appears as the humble guardian of the Mother and her Son. He is at their service: Luke also refers to this several times in his gospel, always presenting “the Child and his Mother” together while speaking about “their purification”. That refers to her privilege of intimacy with Jesus, and also alludes to their common destiny of the cross. By addressing the Mother alone - as Galot observes - Simeon wanted to indicate that she alone, unlike Joseph, would be involved in the tragic fate of the Messiah. The words that follow are unequivocal: “as for you, a sword will pierce your own soul.”
They brought the Child to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord - Jesus is Lord and God but because of his status as a child and his mission as Redeemer "he had to become in all things like his brothers ... in order to atone for the sins of the people". (Heb 2:17), and he submitted to the Law. Jesus does not go to the temple, he is brought there, and for now he does not offer himself but he is offered! As Son he is not author of his own life but he receives them. Indeed, it applies even more dramatically to him who became Lord, not only of his people, but of all nations, who became Servant before submitting first to the law and then to the Cross. Galot observes: "The redemption of the firstborn was justified by the history of the Jewish people. The gesture of the presentation of Jesus has to take on a more universal horizon. He was destined by God to be a light of the Gentiles but had to go through a particular condition of humiliation." However, between parents and child, submission and respect are mutual. The law did not require that the first-born be brought to Jerusalem, but only that the ransom be paid to any priest. Mary and Joseph still did not understand everything. Indeed, they were amazed at what was said of Jesus. By presenting Jesus in the temple of Jerusalem, they show the extent to which consider their child as God's property.

Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother - It is significant that the parents bring the offering, but Simeon and Anna are the ones who give meaning and depth to the gesture, and widen the scope of the thanksgiving: "Lord, now let your servant go in peace ..." and the offering: "He is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, a sign of contradiction ...". In fact, it is after the declaration of Simeon and the intervention of the prophetess Anna that Luke mentions the fact that Mary and Joseph fulfilled the requirements of the law. So even Joseph and Mary, the people most involved in the event, depend on the wisdom of two elderly consecrated persons. Unlike the younger couple who are more immersed in the present, they "have the longer view" looking back to the past and forward to the future, so much so that his parents "marvelled at what was said about him." On the other hand, the wisdom of the elderly man and woman draws on the gift that the young parents had received and their ritual gesture in not keeping that gift for themselves but offering him to God. We are struck by the greatness and humility of Simeon and Anna! "In them" - Congar says - "is summed up all the waiting of Israel, which prophetically is ready to be overtaken and give way to reality." Here we see the two-way obedience that comes from love: the expectation of Anna and Simeon is accomplished thanks to the welcome they offered to Mary and Joseph, and its full messianic significance is seen in the light of their prophecy.

Anna began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem - Mary offered the Child and received the word of Simeon, while Joseph stood guard in silence. Simeon blessed and prophesied, while Anna praised and gave witness. Man and woman serve the Lord in different ways. Adrienne von Speyr writes: "Simeon understands that an act of mediation is necessary between God and men, and that this role belongs to the Mother alone. She alone is so pure as not to put obstacles in her relationship with the Son, nor in her relationship with mankind." The apostles come later and must be purified and confirmed. On the other hand, Mary received a word from Simeon - a word that concerns her intimately - "The mother is not given the task of revelation, something that never involves a woman. Hers is a different role. She gave birth to the Son who is the Word of God. She received the Word in the form of the words of the Angel and in the form of the Son himself. And ever after woman will be more attentive in hearing and receiving the words of God." It is one thing to accept the Word in the heart and in the body, and another to proclaim it in the mission of the apostolic preaching.

May this word, with all the depth of its resonances, enlighten, heal and transform our family and community ties. Let us prepare our hearts to receive the fruit of the season of Advent and Christmas, entering the school of Bethlehem, Nazareth and the Temple. In this way we will learn from the Holy Family what love is and how God wants to be loved. Our task at this time will be a free and loving, patient and grateful, respectful and joyful obedience between husbands and wives, parents and children, between grandparents and grandchildren, obedience capable of recognizing and promoting difference as mediation of the dominion of God. Lord Jesus, through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians, make us grow as you grew in wisdom, age and grace before God and men!
CHRONICLE

LVIV (UKRAINE) - NEW ADMA GROUP

On 24 May 2014 we celebrated the founding of the first group of ADMA in Lviv (Ukraine), animated by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. During Mass in the Parish of Pokrova, on the feast of Mary Help of Christians, eight aspirants who had completed a year of preparation, declared their commitment as members, officially starting the first ADMA group in the Greek-Catholic rite. They prepared for this step with a novena to Mary Help of Christians lasting nine months followed by some days of retreat. For them it was a great event. The celebration was presided over by the Superior of the Special Conscription, Fr Onorino Pistellato and by the Salesians of the Parish of Pokrova. Also present were other groups of the Salesian Family (FMA and Salesian Cooperators), as well as some youth and children. After Mass the Salesians of Vynniki walked in procession around the Church with the ancient image of Mary Help of Christians carried by the members of ADMA. The ceremony ended with the blessing of Mary Help of Christians, after which all present approached and venerated the image of Mary Help of Christians. The celebration ended with a dinner with the Salesian Family. ADMA meetings are held every 24th of the month with Mass and a formation meeting in the FMA community in Lviv (Sister Brygida Zuraw ska FMA).

URUGUAY - ANNUAL MARIAN PILGRIMAGE

On 2 September 2014 a group of 64 members of ADMA went on the annual Marian pilgrimage, visiting some of the Eucharistic and Marian shrines in the city of Montevideo in Uruguay. They came from Liberte’ (San José), Las Piedras (Canelones ), La Tablada, Maturana, Colombo and Villa Colón (Monte video). We started the journey with the Shrine of the Miraculous Medal where, after a short visit, we prayed the rosary. We visited the shrine of Eucharistic Adoration at Cerrito de la Victoria where we were welcomed by the parish priest, Father Juan Silveira. After a tour of the shrine and the recitation of the second mystery of the rosary, we took a group photo with the parish priest and the spiritual animator. We continued the journey to the Grotto of Lourdes, praying the third mystery, and here we stopped for a fine lunch in common. We then proceeded to the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians at Villa Colón, where we recited the fourth mystery and our animator, Father José Correa, celebrated Mass with songs of joy and thanksgiving. We concluded the pilgrimage at the Shrine of Perpetual Help where, af-
After praying the fifth mystery of the rosary, we delighted in contemplating the shrine with its beautiful structure in the style of a basilica and its colourful stained glass windows. (Nelly Godoy).

GUATEMALA - ANNUAL RETREAT

The annual ADMA retreat in Guatemala was held from 14 to 16 November 2014 in the Salesian house at Chibajché Carchá Alta Verapaz. It was coordinated by Fr Guido Maroto, Salesian animator of the Association. The themes were: “From the House of Mary to our homes”, presented by Fr Guido Maroto; “Social networks”, by Fr. Gerardo Hernández; “The concrete fruits that accompany the life of the members: prayer, contemplation and liturgical and sacramental life”, by Fr. Roger Castillo; “The Gospel of Joy”, by Fr. Agustín Vásquez; “Witnesses of evangelical radicalism”, by Fr Guido Maroto. Frs Vittorio Castagna, Melvin Perez and Pedro Medrano participated in the celebrations of the Eucharist, in the ministry of Confession and Holy Hour. A video was shown with the talk given by the Rector Major, Fr Angel Fernandez Artime during his visit to Guatemala in his meeting with the priests, religious and laity. The conclusions of the retreat were that the members of ADMA must evangelize as the Lord asks us, looking for the lost sheep, with love and joy, as often stressed by the Holy Father Pope Francis, and as Don Bosco did, bringing children and young people to Jesus for him to save their souls. Like Don Bosco we can use the Word of God, but also sports, cultural activities, good example, charity work. We can also use the social networks and teach those who use them in the wrong way, that they may learn to use them to seek God and do good (Otoniel Cifuentes).
The Tenth National Congress of Mary Help of Christians in Chile was held in La Serena, 7-9 November 2014. The setting was beautiful with clear skies and calm seas. Certainly Marian fervour influenced the massive convocation that brought together more than 200 members of the Association from all cities, from Iquique to Punta Arenas, brought by devotion to Mary Help of Christians. The festival, which has been taking place for at least twenty years, was marked by deep reflection, willingness to work, family atmosphere and joy. The Educative Pastoral Community of the San Ramón Salesian Industrial School of La Serena cooperated generously with Father Luis Rendich, Rector of the Salesian community, and with Mrs. Henrietta Villalobos, to ensure the success of the event. It was a real celebration of the Salesian Family, since all groups contributed to the preparation and the work necessary for the realization of the Congress. Also worthy of mention was the enthusiasm and commitment of all the participants, most of them elderly, in the various activities: conferences, sharing in groups, plans for the future of the Association, liturgies and Masses, Pilgrimage, leisure, etc. The maturity evident during the Congress shows that the Association has grown in depth and a sense of belonging. Several tasks were highlighted for the coming years: to involve the families of members of the Association; to rejuvenate the groups; to improve communication at all levels; to share more decisively in the Salesian mission for young people most in need. Certainly Mary Help of Christians, who has always accompanied us as our Mother, continues to do so by encouraging us and showing us the way to go in changing times. To her and to all who participated in this event, thank you! (Fr Vincenzo Soccorso, Provincial Animator).

The paper can be read at the following site:

and here: www.donbosco-torino.it/

For every communication you can contact
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On Sunday 23 November 2014 Fr Pierluigi Cameroni and Mr Tullio Lucca, President of the Primary, met with the community of the Daughters of Mary Help of Chieri to speak about ADMA and holiness in the Salesian Family. Sister Manuela Robazza, Superior of the community, expressed her joy and that of the whole community for this meeting of the Salesian Family. Some Marian signs were evident during this meeting: prayer in the chapel of the community and veneration of the statue of Mary Help of Christians sent by Don Bosco even before the sisters came to this house; the Diploma of foundation and aggregation signed by the Rector Major of the time, Fr Paul Albera. The thing that surprised everyone was the date of this document: 24 November 1914, exactly one hundred years ago! This is a sign that this story deserves to be renewed.

The presence of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Chieri dates back to 1878. Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello wanted it to be a home for the service of youth. The house contains some very important souvenirs, linked to the memory of Don Bosco: a letter, the desk on which he is said to have written part of the first rules of the FMA and an armchair in which he rested occasionally. Today it is an important educational centre. The Nursery School, Primary School and Vocational Training centre together welcome more than 700 children and young people every day.

After Mass on the following day, 24 November, Sister Marilena Balcet, provincial animator of ADMA, recalled the centenary of the foundation of ADMA in the house. Once again Mary Help of Christians goes ahead of us and reveals her wish that her association be renewed and continue to spread.

Merry Christmas and Happy 2015