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EDITORIAL

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TIME OF JOY AND PEACE

My dear Friends,

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It is the season of Easter. We wish that the peace and hope of the Easter season be with all of you, also wishing you for the anniversary of the foundation of the ADMA - 18 April 2023 - and for the beginning of the month of May, consecrated to Our Lady, which we will soon celebrate under the title that is dear to us, Help of Christians.

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There is a very strong link between these three moments. The liturgical calendar underlines even more when - like this year 2023 - the date of the foundation of the ADMA is placed between the Easter of Our Lord and the Feast of Mary Help of Christians, as if to remind us that our identity embraces precisely the two pillars, the two risen ones - Jesus and Mary.

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Our joy as Christians, as children of Don Bosco and as ADMA members can only be rooted in the Easter we have just experienced and from which we draw our nourishment. It is really true that **“joy is the gigantic secret of the Christian”** (Chesterton). It is a deep and profound joy that nothing can undermine because it is founded in Jesus who conquered death. Says the prophet Ezekiel,

“Behold, I will open your graves; I will bring you out of your graves, O my people, and bring you back to the land of Israel. You shall know that I am the Lord when I open your graves and bring you out of your graves, O my people. I will bring my spirit into you and you shall live again; I will make you rest in your own land. You

shall know that I am the Lord. I have said it and I will do it" (Ez. 37: 12-14).

At the same time, precisely because we do not experience joy in ourselves but it is a gift we receive, it is up to us to desire it, cherish it and nourish it. St Paul says:

"Rejoice in the Lord, always; I say again, rejoice. Let your cheerfulness be known to all men. The Lord is near! Be anxious for nothing but in every need, present your requests to God with prayers, supplications and thanksgiving; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus". (Philippians 4: 4-7)



So, while we are nourished in Easter, we also look to Mary to learn from her the **'attitude of joy'** and magnify the Lord because **"Great things, the Almighty has done for me"** (Lk. 1: 49). In Mary, we rediscover that the Lord has done great things in our lives; from Mary, we learn to cherish true joy; with Mary, we shun

sadness and discouragement, keeping the events of life in our hearts, even the hardships, trusting and hoping. Through Mary and through her intercession, we finally bring our requests and supplications to Jesus, knowing that we will be comforted by Him and not be disappointed.

The invitation is then to pray unceasingly, that peace may return to the world and that the Lord may give consolation to those who suffer the pains of war.

"And therefore, o Mother of peoples, you who 'know all their sufferings and their hopes', you who maternally feel all the struggles between good and evil, between light and darkness, you who care for the contemporary world, accept our cry that, as moved by the Holy Spirit, we place before your Heart and embrace, with the love of the Mother and Handmaid, this human world of ours which we entrust and consecrate to you, full of concern for the earthly and eternal situation of people. In a special way, we entrust and consecrate to you particularly those people and nations who are in need of your protection. Under your protection, we seek refuge, Holy Mother of God, do not despise the cry of us who are in trial!" (Act of Entrustment John Paul II - Fatima 13 May 1982).

Renato Valera,
ADMA Primaria's President.

Alejandro Guevara,
ADMA Primaria's Spiritual Animator.

FORMATIVE PATH

BLESSED EMBRACE

"Every day we must begin our spiritual progress. Thinking well about this, we will not be surprised to find miseries within us. There is nothing that is already done: we must begin again and with a good heart."

Saint Francis de Sales.

The mercy of God

"Mercy is the first attribute of God. It is the name of God. There are no situations from which we cannot get out. We are not condemned to sink in quicksand".

This is how Pope Francis addressed every man and woman on the planet on the occasion of the proclamation of the Year of Mercy. Jesus spoke of the Father's mercy in the parables, especially that of the **merciful Father** (Lk. 15: 11-32). Above all, He lived mercy simply because He is the Father's mercy in word and deed. Mary is the door of mercy, because through her, God's mercy entered the world. It is in the Person of Jesus that the merciful love of the Father has been revealed so that it reaches each person in their sins, wounds and weaknesses. God's mercy is fully gratuitous. It is a superabundant source of

tenderness, magnanimity and unconditional love. We do not need to buy it nor do we need to deserve it: it is freely and gratuitously given to us.

In the Latin language, the term *'misericordia'* is made up of two words: *'misereri'* and *'cor'*. It is the heart of God that comes to meet every human misery. The wounds of sin, the evil that dwells within us and feeds on our sadness and despondency: all these wounds are visited by God's mercy which takes the form of an embrace, that of the merciful Father.

Rembrandt in his famous painting dwells precisely on this embrace. The father is portrayed as a half-blind old man with a moustache and beard, wearing a long tunic embroidered in gold and a dark red cloak. He is united to the son and the son is united to him. They cannot be separated: the son leans on the father and the father supports the son. With his closed eyes, he throws light on all the characters. With his outstretched arms and embracing hands, he conquers all with his love. With his advanced life, he breathes new life into those who are dying of hardship. Everything starts from him and everything converges on him. The light of his face illuminates the faces of the other characters. This light becomes alive and shining especially in his hands, the source of light and warmth. The whole body of the kneeling son, especially his chest, the seat of his heart, are invaded and penetrated by the light. They are hands of fire that burn away all evil and infuse new life. They are hands that touch and heal, giving hope, trust, comfort.

The left hand is strong and muscular. It is a clenching and supporting hand. It has the typical features of a male hand. The right hand is delicate, gentle and very tender. It rests gently on the shoulder. It does not tread but rather caresses, protects, consoles,



calms. It is a mother's hand. Two different hands for one love: it is both paternal and maternal love. Everything in the father speaks of love: the absorbed face, the clothes that protect, the body that welcomes, the hands that embrace and bless. His body becomes a welcoming womb and his hands hold, squeeze and caress his fond son. His love is welcome, forgiveness, weeping, tenderness, gift, sharing, blessing, wish, joy, celebration, life, inheritance.

The "conditions" for access to God's mercy

If it is true that mercy is free, it is also true that in order to receive it, it is necessary, like the prodigal son, to return to the Father's house. We can summarise the four conditions that open us up to His blessing and merciful embrace: 1) *Trust*, 2) *Humility*, 3) *Gratitude*, 4) *Forgiveness of brothers and sisters*

1) Trust

We have stated that God's mercy is the greatest mystery and the most beautiful treasure that our faith delivers to us. It is not always easy for us to accept: we see it in the Gospel and in our own lives. Sometimes, we find it difficult to receive God's mercy because we have very little trust in the Lord's forgiveness and do not always fully accept it. God forgives us but we fail to forgive ourselves. St. Teresa of the Child Jesus said that what hurts God's heart most is not our sins, but our lack of trust in his love. The greater our trust, the greater the mercy we will be given and the more we will be pleasing to God.

2) Humility and poverty of spirit

Sometimes the reason why it is difficult for us to fully accept mercy is pride: I do not accept that I am a person who has fallen. I would have liked to be the perfect and infallible person. Instead, I have made mistakes but I cannot accept that I am at fault. We would like, after all, to be the ones saved, to be rich on the basis of our good deeds and qualities. We find it difficult to accept that we are poor at heart.

Sometimes we find it difficult to accept God's mercy for ourselves and others. This is the attitude of the elder brother (*"Behold I have served you for many years and have never disobeyed your command and you have not given me a kid"*) and it is the attitude of the Pharisees for whom Jesus tells the parable.

They satisfy their sense of justice and are content with their own works. They think they are entitled to God's blessing and, when this blessing descends on a sinner, they see it as injustice.

This is the presumption of human pride, to insist on one's own rights. We cannot accept the fact that God is so generous to the poor and sinners. But it is right and just for us to accept it because there is always a time in our lives when we are poor and sinners.

3) Being Grateful

There is a third important condition: gratitude. Jesus said in the gospel: *"To him who has, it will be given, and he will have an abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away"* (Mt. 13: 11). We can understand the sentence this way: he who knows that he has received gifts from God and gives thanks, will receive more.

There is a little secret in spiritual life: the more the heart gives thanks, the more God gives, even when life is not perfect and we do not have everything we need. **The more we thank God, the more our heart is open and willing to receive his mercy.**

4) Forgiveness

The fourth condition for receiving God's mercy is very clear in the gospel: **if we do not forgive, God cannot forgive us.** Sometimes what prevents us from receiving God's mercy is lack of mercy, hardness of heart and lack of goodness towards others. *"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall find mercy"* (Mt. 5: 7). The more merciful I am to my brothers and sisters, the more merciful God will be to me.

When we realise that it is too difficult for us to say **"I forgive you"**, we must turn to the Father, because only God can truly forgive. To forgive, we must go through the heart of the Father. This is the source of forgiveness. It is not in me: it is the heart of God, and that is where I must go to seek forgiveness.

The sacrament of reconciliation and the repetition of the same sins

In Christian life, there is a suffering that comes neither from external situations nor from heaven:

the realisation that evil comes from within us and distances us from God. Despite our best efforts and intentions, we always fall back on certain sins; it almost seems like a kind of specialisation to always commit one or two in particular.

Certainly, several sins that we once confessed are no longer done or return at **well-located** periods of life. Others are likely to **always remain**, despite age and situations; they are sins that are part of us and immediately come to mind when we look inside ourselves; we will call it 'my' sin or my 'original sin'. Each of us has his or her own 'original sin' that always says 'deep down you don't love God', making us suffer more than any other. Of many sins, we tell ourselves sincerely, we do not even feel pain, 'ours' on the other hand discourages us, as if our entire relationship with God is tied to him for good (when we do not commit it) or for evil (when we fall into it). My sin is an appeal to contemplate the patience of Jesus who has much patience with us.

Knowing and giving a precise name to **one's sin** is a sign of Christian maturity; those who live a rose-water faith do not understand what it means to suffer for the sins committed, which are simply weaknesses that everyone commits because **we are human**. When we speak of sorrow for sin, we are referring to the state of mind of a conscious Christian, not burdened by guilt but able to measure in the light of God's word. But the moment I rely only on grace and not make an effort to be good, I begin to suffer.

We can state a simple truth. **My sin** (which can turn into a vice over time) will probably stay with me all my life. Fighting it head-on means time. This statement may shock, perhaps even scandalise, but we all know that this is so; and we know this because a thousand times we have tried to correct ourselves and a thousand times we have fallen back into it with ease!

What is to be done then? **Transform** sin into that 'weakness' that exalts God's mercy and power (cf. 2 Cor. 12: 9). Here are some ways.

1) First of all, it is necessary to **accept one's sin** by confessing it with simplicity and without shame, educating oneself in prayer to ask the Lord to get rid of it, if He so wishes.

2) **Next**, it is good to **unmask** the illusion that hides behind sin, asking oneself: what do I really seek? By committing this sin, what do I hope or think I will achieve?

3) **And again**: it is healthy to persuade oneself from time to time that **error teaches one to be more humble and to forgive others as God forgives us**.

4) **Again**: the devil does not offer us opportunities for evil because he wants evil in himself. His real purpose is to shame us before God by distancing us from His presence. The devil is the Accuser who stops at the door of the temple to say: *"How? You who do this have the courage to go before the Lord? Are you not ashamed?"* Here, then, is another caution in the face of sin: the evil that lurks within me can never take away my ability to turn to God. **I may be a sinner, but never one to be overcome by shame**. That is why, as good sons and daughters of Don Bosco, we approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation **with such confidence and frequency and never tire of humbly begging God's forgiveness and enjoying His infinite Mercy**.

*Trust, humility,
gratitude, forgiveness.*

For personal reflection

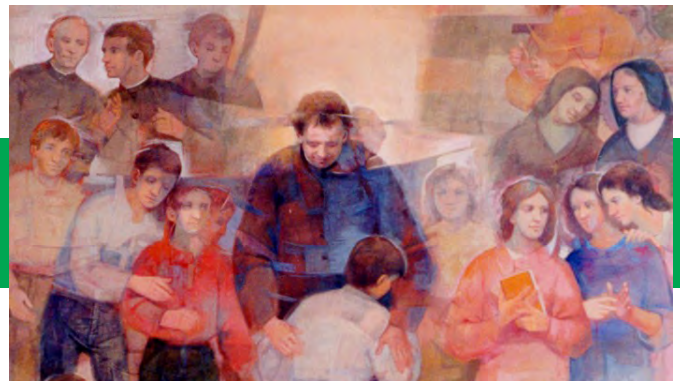
1) In which of the four 'conditions' (trust, humility, gratitude, forgiveness) for accepting God's mercy do I feel weakest? Why? What can I do to grow?

2) Is there a sin that 'distinguishes me' and that I must confess frequently? What do I actually seek by committing that sin? What does it say about me?

3) On what occasions do I feel like the younger son in the parable of Prodigal son? And on which ones, the elder son?

Monthly commitment

Every day I commit myself to give thanks for 3 good things during the day.



ENTRUST - TRUST - SMILE

LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR FR. ÁNGEL FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME

As indicated in the ADMA Regulations, the Association of Mary Help of Christians is *"an itinerary of sanctification and Salesian apostolate"*.

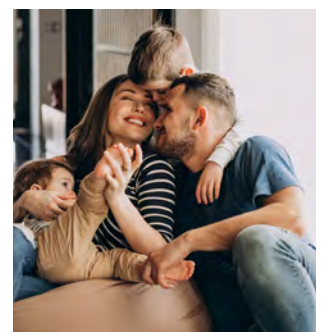
Don Bosco, inspired by the teachings of St. Francis de Sales, proposed the goal of holiness as a call for all and repeated to the young people:

"I am waiting for you all in Paradise!"

It is a path that sometimes requires us to go against

the tide, but we must not be discouraged by our sufferings, because living as Christians makes us happy already on this earth and opens wide the doors of eternal life.

The Rector Major reminds us that first and foremost it is a path of holiness to be lived in the family, seeking the good of spouse and children, accepting them as they are, dedicating time to dialogue, knowing



how to understand and forgive with affection and respect, without complaining.

“A family that does not give up in the face of difficulties and where both parents and children live their faith in God and His Providence, like the Holy Family of Nazareth, is a great support and a fruitful resource for the Church and for society”.

Consecrated women and men are called to give their witness to make the path of holiness accessible to all, and to propose to children to follow Jesus in day-to-day life, made up of knowledge, friendship and service.

In the Salesian Family, there are many saints, blessed, venerable and servants of God under 29 years of age. Even today, there are young people who are committed to a path of authentic Christian life that leads them to a holiness ‘next door’, as Pope Francis reminds us.

The ADMA proposes to all the two great pillars of Salesian spirituality, the Eucharist and Mary Help of Christians, and invokes the intercession of the Saints to support us on the path of faith. In particular, among the members of the Association, we mention the Blessed Alexandrina Maria da Costa, a Portuguese mystic, who offered herself to the Lord to **‘love, suffer and convert’**, the Blessed Teresa Cejudo Redondo, wife and mother, martyr in 1936, who contributed to the foundation of the ADMA in Pozoblanco (Spain); the Servants of God Rosetta Franzi Gheddo from the group of Nizza Monferrato (Italy) and Carmen Nebot Soldan from the group of La Palma del Condado (Spain).

The new Saints of the Salesian Family include Artemide Zatti, Salesian nurse and coadjutor, recently canonised by Pope Francis. These models are a stimulus for the sanctification of ADMA members, the Salesian Family and the whole Church.

Andrea and Maria Adele Damiani

FORMATION OF ADMA ASPIRANTS

4. LET US BE COMMITTED TO...

The fourth chapter of the formation programme proposed by the Primary ADMA at Valdocco, Turin, refers to Article 4 of the Regulations which deals with the personal commitment of the members.

Whoever joins the Association accepts the call to live the Christian life according to the Salesian spirituality, chooses to anchor his/her own life to Jesus in the Eucharist and to Mary Help of Christians, and with this choice commits himself/herself to make his/her own a style of life to be brought into the family, at work, in ecclesial, social and inter-personal relationships. It is a style that aims to unify life and apostolate whereby the first commitment of each one is personal participation in liturgical life, prayer and the sacraments, to be always accompanied and sustained by Grace. In particular, the Eucharist is the privileged moment of real encounter with the Risen One in the Word and Bread. In the relationship of love with Jesus, we also understand the importance of frequent recourse to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, to experience the



merciful embrace of the Father who gives us healing from our sins and the strength to begin again.

Closely linked to the commitment to participate in liturgical life is that of living and spreading, according to Don Bosco’s spirit, devotion to Mary Help of Christians, unsurpassable model of union with Jesus and admirable help for our participation in His life of Grace.

Privileged moments are the practices of popular piety which each associate commits to renew, strengthen and live the commemoration of the 24th of each month, the Rosary, the novena in preparation for the feast of Mary Help of Christians, the blessing of Mary Help of Christians, pilgrimages to Marian shrines, processions and collaboration in parish life. They help us to live and spread the popular dimension of the devotion to Mary Help of

Christians, to create a spirit of communion among all the groups scattered around the world and to ask for graces for all the people who entrust themselves to our prayers.

Among the various practices of popular piety, the Rosary has a fundamental importance, as St. John Paul II taught us in his Apostolic Letter, Rosarium Virginis Mariae:

«The Rosary of the Virgin Mary, in the sobriety of its elements, concentrates in itself the depth of the entire Gospel message, of which it is almost a compendium. [...] With it, the Christian people place themselves in Mary's school, allowing themselves to be introduced to the contemplation of the beauty of Christ's face and to the experience of the depth of His love [...] The Rosary mystically transports us to the side of Mary who is committed to following the human growth of Christ in the house of Nazareth. This enables her to educate and mould us with the same solicitude, until Christ is fully formed in us. This action of Mary, totally founded on that of Christ and radically subordinate to it, in no way prevents the immediate union of believers with Christ but facilitates it. It is the luminous principle expressed by the Second Vatican Council, which I have experienced so strongly in my life, making it the basis of my episcopal motto: "Totus tuus". A motto, as is well known, inspired by the doctrine of St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, who explained Mary's role in the process of the conformation of each one of us to Christ as follows: "All our perfection consists in being conformed, united and consecrated to Jesus Christ. Therefore, the most perfect of all devotions is unquestionably that which conforms, unites and consecrates us most perfectly to Jesus Christ. Now, since Mary is the creature most conformed to Jesus Christ, it follows that, of all devotions, the one that most consecrates and conforms a soul to Our Lord is the devotion to Mary, His holy Mother, and that the more a soul is consecrated to her, the more it will be consecrated to Jesus Christ". Never as in the Rosary do the way of Christ and the way of Mary appear so profoundly united».

Being part of ADMA requires members to imitate Mary, cultivating in their own family a Christian environment of welcome, hospitality, listening, concrete help and generous availability. This is the family spirit which Don Bosco also wanted to be lived at Valdocco, in the pedagogy proper to the

Preventive System.

The imitation of Mary makes us sharers in her maternal concern for the salvation of mankind, especially the young and the poor, in the parishes to which we belong, as a concrete expression of communion with the local Church and a manifestation of the Salesian charism in the environment in which we are placed. The apostolic and educational commitment also becomes a vocational commitment to pray for and support lay, religious and ministerial vocations in the Church and in the Salesian Family.

Finally, each associate is committed to living the spirituality of daily life, following the example of Mary's evangelical attitudes:

- **Fiat – Entrust:** docility and availability to God's will;
- **Stabat – Confide:** faithfulness and perseverance in the hour of trial and the cross;
- **Magnificat – Be happy:** thanksgiving for the great things God is working in us and among us;

In this regard, we note that the motto '**Entrust, Confide, Be happy!**' is also the title of the Letter of the Rector Major, Don Angel Fernandez Artime, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the foundation of ADMA, in which he underlines how the commitment of the members is precisely that of following a path of holiness in daily life:

«This "itinerary of sanctification and Salesian apostolate", [...] is easy to follow and oriented towards endless happiness. St. Francis de Sales and Don Bosco presented holiness not as a path reserved for the privileged few but always as a call for everyone, wherever they live, whatever their state of life is [...] First of all, it is a path of holiness to be lived in the family, giving a positive witness, mainly through perseverance in love between spouses, between parents and children, between brothers and sisters, between young and old. [...] What is most fascinating about this call to holiness is that it is not a matter of doing special things, out of the ordinary, but of seriously allowing the Holy Spirit to work in the heart, in the depths of what we are and feel, continuing to carry on with study, work, relationships, friendships, services, summer camps, singing... everything».

Gian Luca and Mariangela Spesso

FAMILY EVENTS

Adma - Sicily



On Sunday, the 5th March, the ADMA groups of Arenella Palermo, Capaci, Alcamo and Marsala met at the Church of San Gabriele Arcangelo, Palermo, for a day of spiritual preparation for Holy Easter.

Through prayer, meditation and Eucharistic Adoration, Don Angelo Tomasello, the parish priest of the host parish, emphasised God's mercy.

Through his reflection on the prophet Jonah, he emphasised human frailties and threw light on God's infinite mercy, which for all is a safe harbour, true consolation.

A day full of Grace! All the members were deeply moved by the words of the priest who gracefully led the meditation.

San Benigno Canavese



On Saturday, the 25th February, a small group of the Adma Primary was warmly welcomed in San Benigno Canavese by the local Adma group, which had been pursuing its path of prayer and entrustment to Mary Help of Christians for some time.

It was a time of sharing experiences which ended with the recitation of the Holy Rosary together and the Holy Mass in the ancient Abbey of Fruttuaria.

The Abbot Fr. Mario and Fr. Alejandro Guevara, Adma's spiritual animator, concelebrated.

WE ARE ASKING EVERYONE TO SEND US AN ARTICLE, A PHOTO OF A FORMATION MEETING, THE COMMEMORATION OF THE 24TH OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS, A VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY BEING CARRIED OUT. The article (.doc format, max. 1200 characters without counting spaces) and a maximum of 2 photos (.jpg digital format and no less than 1000px wide), with a title and/or brief description, must be sent to adma@admadonbosco.org. It is necessary to indicate in the subject line of the e-mail "Family Events" and in the text the author's data (name, surname, place of the shot, affiliation Adma, city, country).

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