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## EDITORIAL

### MAY JESUS AND MARY LIVE WITH US

Dear friends,

We are at the end of our Lenten journey and we are approaching the Easter, Resurrection of Our Lord. With joy, we can reflect during these days and renew our membership to ADMA precisely in the light of this unique and great event in which our salvation is rooted.

It is precisely Don Bosco's founding act of the ADMA (Art 1 of our regulations) which takes strength and finds its deep meaning in the death and resurrection of Jesus: *"Don Bosco, after having raised to Mary, according to the indications received from Her in a dream, the Basilica dedicated to Mary Help of Christians (Turin, Valdocco, 1868) wanted to erect a year later in the Basilica, the Association of the Devotees of Mary Help of Christians (18th April 1869) in order to spread in the world the devotion to the Virgin invoked under this title".*

As well described in the commentary to the regulations which we use for our training as ADMA aspirants,

*First of all, the word "to radiate" recalls the commitment to be "light of the world" (Mt. 5,14), to "bring fire to the earth" (Lk. 12, 49), to cooperate in Christ's mission for the salvation of souls under Mary's maternal guidance, recognising in the Eucharist, the source and summit of all life.*

We must always remember that it is not we who are the source of the light we wish to radiate, but the source is Christ and the light comes precisely from his Resurrection, which we will celebrate in these days.

Secondly, it is good to recall the fact that we primarily want to radiate devotion to Mary: we are devotees of Mary in the sense that we entrust ourselves to her, we imitate her and we want her to live with us, in our homes, in our families.

Even this devotion, the 'taking Mary into the home' is nourished and finds its source in the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus: "Jesus then, seeing his mother and there beside her the disciple whom he loved, said to his mother, "Woman, behold, here is your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that moment the disciple took her into his house". (Jn. 19:26-27). "Let us take Our Lady into our house!". In this way, we will be 'beloved disciples' because we will take better care of our baptismal sonship and we will feel more concretely the beneficial effects of Mary's motherhood, [...] with the affection and realism with which Don Bosco filially took care of Our Lady's presence in the house, planning and realising his many initiatives always in dialogue with her.

Finally, our regulations, recalling the Charter of Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family, state: experience ***"makes us see the very bright world that Mary has continued from heaven and with the greatest success, the mission as Mother of the Church and Help of Christians that she had begun on earth"***. This maternal and active presence of Mary is the

foundation of the Association and the inspiration of the members' commitment to serve the Kingdom of God.

Here too, the reference to Jesus' Resurrection is evident: Mary is a living presence in our midst and continues in the history of the Church and humanity her maternal mission as mediatrix of grace for her children. The Resurrection is a concrete fact realised, so far, only in two individuals of our human race: Jesus and Mary! They two experience the Easter, Resurrection as the first fruits and the beginning of the whole renewed human race. They are the 'new man' and the 'new woman': the new Adam and the new Eve. And they are so not only as a model to be imitated or simply a goal to be achieved, but precisely as the only effective principle of regeneration and life for all.

Our joyful wishes for a Holy Easter

**Renato Valera,**  
**President ADMA Valdocco.**

**Fr. Gabriel Cruz,**  
**Spiritual Animator ADMA Valdocco.**



***"Let us take Our Lady into our house!"***

## FORMATIVE PATH

### NOT WITH BLOWS...

In the dream at 9, there are strong movements that stand out because of their intensity and that in the story acquire such verisimilitude that they leave a mark not only in the memory but also in the body, a detail that remains vivid even if recounted many years later: *“When I heard those blasphemies, I immediately threw myself into their midst, using my fists and words to silence them.... My hands seemed to hurt from the punches I had given, my face ached from the slaps I had given.”*

When the action becomes so agitated, what he lets transpire becomes more immediate, unfiltered: John has a strong character, where the impetus to react easily wins over possible hesitations, fears, reluctance. It is not only the dream that signals his temperament. The fact that in the quarrels with his step-brother Antonio, it was he, the youngest, and not Giuseppe, Margherita’s eldest son, who reached such a point of tension that he had to be sent away from home from February 1827 until November 1829 - Moglia farm - confirms that, as a character, Giovanni was not a submissive one.

The testimonies sworn during the trial that would lead to the declaration of the heroic virtues of Don Bosco, and finally to his canonisation, become interesting: *“By his own confession, which I heard, he was naturally fiery and haughty and could not suffer resistance, yet by many acts he was able to restrain himself so much that he became a peaceful and meek man and so master of his own nature”* (Marchisio, in *Copia Publica Transumpti Processus Ordinaria*, 629r). Similar is the opinion of Fr. Cagliari and Fr. Rua: *“By his own confession, his natural character was fiery and haughty, such that he could not suffer resistance, and he felt an inexpressible struggle within himself, whenever he had to present himself to someone to ask for charity”* (Cagliari, *ibid* 1166r); *“He was of a fiery temper, as I, and many others with me, have been able to ascertain; for in various circumstances we noticed how much violence he had to do to repress the outbursts of anger for the contrarities that happened to him. And if this was the case in his old age, it leads one to believe that his character was even more vivid in his youth”* (Rua, *ibid* 2621 r-v).

In the dream, this is precisely the first word the

majestic character says: *‘Not with blows’*. There is an indication of direction that corresponds to a sharp turn. John is taken aback and somehow resists this invitation, pressing on with his questions about *‘who you are’* and the impossibility of doing what is proposed to him.

We know from the story of those who left us the *Memoirs of the Oratory*, written 40 years later, that in reality that conversion, more than a moral or even just methodological change, from something that does not work to something that works better, was a convergence of a continuous, gradual, fruitful succession of educational processes and spiritual paths that will make John not only capable of controlling himself, but a genius of the educational relationship, a *‘soul friend’* capable of directing that powerful energy into a force that grows, not represses. The first not to be repressed is precisely this inner charge. Indeed, the teacher who makes the impossible possible will give him the task of making himself stronger and stronger, inside and out: humble, strong and robust.

It is a force that from violent opposition becomes generative energy, no less intense and resilient. It does not stop in the face of arrogance and wins. It conquers evil with good. A victory, therefore, not a letting oneself be overwhelmed by aggression or fleeing in fear.

This kind of strength that knows how to confront violence and redeem it from within has a genuinely evangelical flavour. The ‘turn the other cheek’ with which the call to love one’s enemies is paradoxically made explicit can be seen embodied in the days of Easter, where the worst of evil becomes a pathway to the most fruitful good ever, from the Alpha to the Omega of our universe.

Along with not ‘opposing the wicked’ comes the insistence in the Gospels on **FREEDOM**, especially in the gospel of John, an eyewitness and at the same time the last to narrate with what has happened also its meaning, that is, the direction that, that Easter imprints on the whole of history. It is the free gift of self. Jn 10:17-18: *“This is why the Father loves me: because I give my life, only to take it up again. No*

## Formative path

one takes it away from me: I lay it by myself. I have the power to give it and the power to take it back". This confirms how much power is developed from that clear choice of direction, **of 'towards where', of con-version and con-vergence: 'Not with blows'.**

For Don Bosco, it will become very clear that **this is the only educational path worth pursuing, where auctoritas truly becomes the art of making one grow**, according to the original meaning of the term (augere). The rejection of an educational system based rather on repression and punishment is for him a trajectory of no return, even when he has now crossed the ocean and his people transplant the oratory to Patagonia. In his final years, the fear that this spirit would be lost would bring him to tears and lead him to write some of the most heartfelt and incisive pages, such as the letter from Rome on 10th May 1884: **"It is not enough to love, they must realise that they are loved"**. That historic letter was also in the form of a dream and could almost be understood as an answer that Don Bosco in his final years gave to that impetuous Giovannino, not as an antithesis but as a review of the entire path from the point of arrival: **"In his time you will understand everything"**.

For us who reflect on it after years, this life journey is so generative, in which we are personally involved, each with his or her own story, with two possible gifts to grasp:

- **It is possible to redirect energy**, not suppress it but give it a new direction. It is a slow and tiring path, but it is worth it. One becomes neither less strong nor less effective. The people who have done us the most good are educators and teachers who have taken steps in this direction.

- **It is a path that demands and is nourished by great faith**. It does not seek the immediate effect but knows how to believe in the fruit even when there is only a seed, not infrequently the smallest of all. **This is the logic of Easter**. It is a field in which between education and evangelisation, between nature and grace, between the challenge of the present and the hope of the future, a consonance is established that is as divine as it is human. What we are, with our reliance and patience, is strengthened by the grace that is given to us from above. The experience of our saints, among whom



*"It is not enough to love, they must realise that they are loved"*

*Don Bosco*

the martyrs are always first on the list, confirms this, and is proven by the variety of contexts and situations in which this winning of evil with good has been achieved. It is not a question of culture or of particular historical conjunctures: it concerns human relations always, before, now and after us, with the same permanent modernity that the Gospel parables have.

**Silvio Roggia, SDB**

## NAZARETH, GOD'S FAMILY

### 6. MARY AND JOSEPH, THE HUSBAND AND THE WIFE

Nazareth could with good reason be called *'the house of beautiful love'*. To 'beautiful love', the Church dedicates a special place in the Marian Missal with a celebration dedicated to 'Mary, Mother of beautiful love'. Beautiful love is when human love is all enveloped and interpenetrated by God's love and becomes its mirror and transparency. It is when eros and agape are reconciled, when virginity and nuptiality are properly positively understood, when intimacy is accompanied by modesty. It is when fruitfulness does not contradict chastity and chastity favours fruitfulness, when dialogue is silent because it is inhabited by the mystery of God, and silence is not empty and sterile, but a space for profound communication.

Contemplating Mary's purest love, *the Church sees in it the brightest sign of God's glory and Wisdom*. She eminently applies to her the words that the Old Testament dedicates to Judith: "there is no creature on earth like her for the beauty of her countenance and the wisdom of her words" (Jdt. 11:21). The humble and silent radiance of Mary's face and heart, after having illuminated Joseph's face and warmed his heart, then turned to the human generation of the Son of God, so that he might be recognised as "the most beautiful among the sons of men", and was finally destined for the Church, so that she might take the form of the "immaculate Bride" (Eph. 5:27), because, as the liturgy says: "from Mary's most pure thalamus you brought forth the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ, your Son".

The reverberation of Mary's beauty is something that all Christians, and specifically spouses, should continually nourish themselves with and be infinitely grateful for. It is a *native beauty* because she is immaculate, a *beauty perfected* at great cost because she is sorrowful, and a *beauty that is now glorious*, which spouses can draw upon by taking Mary into their home as "the dearest one" (Jn. 19:27). This is how the Church expresses it: "beautiful in your conception, free from all stain of sin, and all wrapped up in the radiance of your grace. Beautiful in your virginal birth, in which you gave the world your Son, the splendour of your glory, our brother and saviour. Beautiful in the passion of Christ, impregnated by his blood, as a meek lamb united to

the sacrifice of the meekest lamb, bestowed with a new maternal mission. Beautiful in the resurrection of the Lord, with whom she reigns glorious, sharing in his triumph."

In the light of Mary, Mother of beautiful love, let us try to reflect on the delicate and wonderful subject of *marital chastity*, whose pre-marital preparation, in spite of the customs of our times, is actually taken for granted. Yes, because beauty is the sensible manifestation of love, but true love is no less than the gift of self, and there is no sensible enchantment or loving feeling, however intense, that can think of presupposing or improvising it: True love must be received as a gift in joy and matured in sorrow to the point of forgiveness, which is that marvellous capacity that comes from God to regenerate even seventy times seven every wounded or exhausted relationship.

In the face of the incomparable beauty of Mary Immaculate and the sublime purity of her spousal love, Christian spouses - as Adrienne von Speyr, a physician and mystic of our time, first a bride and then a consecrated woman, explains - "to live a perfectly Christian marriage, they will not simply ignore the mortifications present in sexuality, but will have to learn to understand them more and more with reference to the cross and in the light of its purifying fire. Otherwise, as we see, couples break up, marriages fail, and children suffer."

#### A married and virginal love

In spite of the drab, maternal but not feminine image of Mary, and paternal but not virile of Joseph, that has too often been suggested, *Mary and Joseph experienced a splendid encounter of love and an intense desire to belong to each other in the full service of God*. The common sensibility, educated by original sin and all its consequences, instinctively thinks that virginity and spousality are alternatives, and finds it hard to believe that a virginal love can also be passionate. In reality, God's love does not extinguish human love, but, on the contrary, kindles it, purifies it and intensifies it.

Adrienne explains that the openness of one to the other, as a consequence of their mutual promise,

does not take away from the first place that love for God occupies and continues to occupy in their hearts.

The singularly virginal love of Joseph and Mary does not compromise, but perfects their spousal love, since it does not in any way seek to anticipate the will of God, which is always mysterious even when we know it in its general outline. In the school of their marriage, we understand that God's love is capable of freeing engaged and married couples from hasty judgements or deep-rooted prejudices, from naive or exaggerated expectations, from illusory or erroneous expectations. Mary married Joseph, totally oriented to God's will, that - Adrienne again explains in words of rare depth - one would think that "she did not expect children from Joseph. Even so, in fact, as with a vow of virginity, she should have established something beforehand. Mary lives beyond this decision; for her, the decision of marriage is by no means a decision against virginity and the decision of the earthly state is not a decision against the state of perfection. She does not reflect on their compatibility. She only knows a purpose to which she adheres without stopping, going back or deviating: to do God's will in everything and perfectly". Wonderful: to Mary, unlike us sinners, the incompatibility of virginity and nuptiality does not even occur to her.

The case of Joseph is different. In him, every couple can mirror themselves and resolve to take Mary as the Mother of beautiful love. He, though a righteous man, was still among sinners, and it was impossible for him not to wonder how to keep being a virgin and being married together. But this should in no way make us think that the solution was for him to shrink or freeze: "In the betrothal, he experienced the real love of a woman and this love of his future bride enriched him as only the love of a woman can fill a man".



### The heart of Mary and Joseph

In her earthly existence, Mary achieved a wonderful synthesis of *femininity and modesty*, and Joseph, at her side, became a splendid example of *virility and purity*. Needless to say, these binomials are certainly not common currency today, and how in any case, today as yesterday, they are a miracle of grace, of that mysterious work of preservation or deliverance from evil that God works in his sons and daughters. Yes, because there are young women who already with their bearing know how to revitalise their men, and there are young men who already with their affectionate patience know how to restore integrity to their women.

In any case, it is a matter of understanding that *virginity does not debase the man and takes nothing away from feminine tenderness*: it does not exasperate the heart, nor does it freeze it, on the contrary - Bossuet said - "it gives it greater fullness and freedom". In fact, as long as it is not lived egoistically or neurotically, *virginal integrity predisposes to conjugal love and increases it*: bringing the loving feeling into the divine sphere does not in fact mean destroying it, but perfecting it. Between Mary and Joseph all this happened in a simple and sublime manner: "the man's love - Adrienne again instructs us - is modelled on that of the woman, who is the silent educator of virile impulse. Mary virginalised Joseph, as she had to virginalise so many young men with her smile, and that priestly lineage owes it to her if it succeeds in preserving in this world, with ease, the mystery of virile virginity. But she did not take away his vigour, his drive, his ardour; she did not diminish his capacity to give and to receive manifestations of tenderness. Joseph's gaze was changed by meeting that gaze; his senses were sublimated, having been invested in the radiance of that unique body in the world".

Sadly, there are too many brides who, along with a thousand other reasons, stray from their spouses for religious reasons as well, arousing in the spouses silent displeasure or dull resentment (as if God were taking away the woman he had given them), and understandably exposing them to many temptations. Now, however, for Mary, who was perfectly consecrated to God, this was not the case: **her total orientation to God did not diminish her affection for Joseph**, nor did the virginal mode of her marriage make her 'separated at home'. On the contrary, her marriage to Joseph became

## Nazareth, God's family

fundamental to the nuptial configuration of the future Church. Adrienne goes so far as to say that while "Mary will accompany Jesus to the cross, thus touching the highest point of her dedication, and there she will be the perfect bride, she was prepared for this very high commission during her stay as bride, at Joseph's side".

And do not think that Joseph's renunciation was experienced with suspicious resentment or resigned sadness, as a disappointment. The great Polish novelist Jan Dobraczynski, in his inspiring book, *'The Father's Shadow'*, explains it this way: "Such purity radiated from that girl that every thought of evil died before it even formed. How much simplicity there was in this girl! The feeling of having been able to reciprocate such great love with renunciation kindled an enthusiasm stronger than the calls of the flesh. Mary and Joseph did not need to speak: their thoughts met unceasingly". How much better things would be between spouses if they understood that *sexual communion* may perhaps then *foster*, but first and foremost it *requires* deeper spiritual communication!

### Dialogue and nuptial silence

In the light of the unique marriage between Mary and Joseph, the agreement of virginity and nuptiality can have a very concrete meaning for all spouses, and that is the *search for harmony between dialogue and silence*: love needs and is nourished by both. **Silence is the womb of the word, the word is the fruit of silence.** Silence without speech is sterile, speech without silence is chatter. **Authentic silence is waiting for truth, authentic speech speaks truth.** The alternation and belonging of word and silence is a profound expression of the exchange of love of man and woman. The man for his part is predominantly speech, but he usually processes problems in silence, and it is difficult for him to give word to his feelings and communicate them to the woman. The woman for her part is predominantly silence as the womb of the word, but ordinarily deals with difficulties first of all by verbalising them, confiding them, and we know how difficult it is for her, normally, to contain her verbosity. As we understand, the right conjugal syntax is at stake, the one that creates and preserves understanding and complicity: every woman likes to receive true and intense words from a man, just as every man seeks in a woman a hospitable body and a smiling face. That is why a glance at the silence of Nazareth can be good for newlyweds.

In their silence, Mary and Joseph are edifying above all for the fact that *they did not naively pretend to understand and be understood at once, in everything and at all costs.* It is the typical **women's wanting to explain themselves**, always with the intimate conviction that they are right or, on the contrary, that they are wrong; or it is **the men's wanting to be right**, perhaps without explaining themselves or even knowing that they are wrong. It is men's struggle to grasp women's emotional communication, and women's struggle to grasp men's rational synthesis. Instead - and this is a good cue for everyone - *the bond between Mary and Joseph is shrouded and accompanied by mystery.* When Mary 'found herself with child by the Holy Spirit', an event greater than herself happens to her. There are no words to communicate this to Joseph.

This is why Mary presents herself to him as she is, at the cost of being misunderstood or misinterpreted: trust in God prevails, and also in Joseph. Jean Guilton sees something heroic in this silence: "the heroic aspect of this nuptial silence before Joseph was to expose herself to the suspicion of the one she loved. But acting well and not being understood are things that almost always go hand in hand, that help one to live by God". From Mary and Joseph, newlyweds can learn that understanding is the first step to knowing. 'Understanding', in fact, means 'embracing', and newlyweds know how an embrace says much but does not explain everything, says more than it explains, tries to say even what it cannot explain. But just like that it communicates more than words.

Adrienne goes even deeper. Mary's silence refers not only to the **extent** of Joseph's understanding, but also and above all to the **immensity** of God's gift! *When God's work in the soul of one or the other is at stake between spouses, intimacy is clothed in modesty.* There are things that cannot be said, for they are unspeakable: "Mary is silent, for she shares a secret directly with God. She understands that this mystery is of such a nature for the whole future Church that she cannot therefore dispose of it. At this moment there is nothing suitable for it to be communicated to Joseph." This is why he goes on to explain: "Christian spouses protect the secret that each one has before God. Hand in hand they enter the Church, but they do not speak afterwards about what each has confessed. This silence does not limit or disturb their intimacy". More still, "the

secret of the spouses, which each has before God, not only cannot disturb their mutual love, but can make it more fruitful, deepen it and ennoble it. Far from compromising the integrity of their dedication,

it represents in time the best guarantee of the ever new vitality of human love”.

Roberto Carelli, SDB

## HUMBLE AND HIGHEST CREATURE

*In our Pilgrimage with Mary, Teacher of Integrale Ecology*

### 7. MARY, BREATH OF GOD

*Before reading this text, I invite you to stop for a moment, close your eyes and listen to your breathing. I don't know if you ever noticed it: without breathing we cannot live. Yet, most of the time in our lives we do not realise that we are breathing.*



We realise this when we start having health difficulties, such as a cold, or when we are in environments where the air is lacking or is bad. Air pollution is one of the harmful consequences of industrial development. Lack of oxygen is one of the consequences of unrestrained deforestation that has injured and continues to injure ever larger areas of our earth. Many of the diseases that affect us and lead to our death are linked to the toxic substances we breathe, paradoxically, not only in developed countries, but also in poorer countries, where the West often dumps its waste of all kinds, without any control or realistic possibilities for disposal.

Yet, over the last few years, we have also demonstrated the ability to change our behaviour to diminish the deleterious effects of pollution: just think of the 'hole in the ozone layer', which seems to have closed thanks to the joint efforts of international governments to reduce the production of the harmful gases that caused it. If we succeeded

once, that means we can succeed again! It is important, to this end, to **mature more and more in discernment and freedom, so that we can make the choices, big and small**, that the planet needs, each according to our social position and responsibilities.

**The air, in Scripture, is the symbol of the Spirit of God and freedom, and following the Spirit in freedom almost always requires the courage to make choices against the tide.** Nicodemus, for example, was a leader of the Jews. That is, he was a person who had a social, public position that gave him prestige and authority in relation to others. He was also a Pharisee, i.e. one who had studied the law and was committed to its observance. For Nicodemus, moreover, all this was not just appearance: he truly loved God and sought him with all his heart. Nicodemus is not one to be satisfied with what he has already achieved. This is precisely why he feels drawn to Jesus and desires to meet him. Fear of the judgement of others, however, drives him to go to Jesus at night. Nicodemus is not a free man. Jesus understands him and announces to him the liberation that the Spirit gives to those who allow themselves to be led by Him. The Spirit is pure freedom, like the wind, the breath of which we perceive but cannot control the direction of its blowing. Whoever is born again of the Spirit, thanks to Baptism, is called to resemble the Spirit. In the letter to the Galatians, St. Paul forcefully reminds the believers of this: “Christ has set us free that we might remain free; stand firm therefore and do not let the yoke of slavery be imposed upon you again” (Gal. 5:1). In the case of the Galatians, as in the case of Nicodemus, it was a matter of making salvation depend not on keeping the law, but on love. In our case, it is a matter of learning to recognise what weighs us down and forces us to repeat habits that do not save, while God opens before us the new paths of his creativity and love.



## Humble and highest creature

In the face of life's difficulties, in the face of personal failures, in the face of the ecological crisis and the suffering of so many brothers and sisters, we can have the experience of the prophet Ezekiel, to whom God shows an expanse of withered bones, representing the people of Israel who have lost hope of being rescued and delivered by God (Ezekiel 37). Faced with that spectacle, God asks the prophet: "Son of man, shall these bones be revived?" And the prophet replies: "Lord God, you know it". Ezekiel, with these words, acknowledges at once his own weakness and the power of God. As creatures, we cannot create life from death. God, however, can do it and wants to do it in our lives. All he asks from us is willingness to allow ourselves to be filled by the Spirit. Thanks to Ezekiel's faith, God can fulfil prophecy: "Prophecy to the spirit, prophesy son of man, and proclaim to the spirit: Says the Lord God: Spirit, come from the four winds and be with us. and blow upon these dead, that they may be revived". "I prophesied as he had commanded me and the spirit entered them and they came back to life and stood up". By restoring life to withered bones, God repeats the gesture of creation, when he had breathed his Spirit into the nostrils of Adam, newly moulded from the earth (Gen 2:7). This is why the New Testament presents the resurrection of Christ and of believers as the beginning of a new creation: "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; old things have passed away, behold new things have come into being" (2 Cor 5:17).

It is not said of Mary that at the angel's announcement, or even before she left in haste to join Elizabeth, she stopped to ask the permission of her parents or Joseph, whose bride she was (Lk 1:26-39). A disobedience that is attentive listening to one's conscience, the sacred place in the human being where God dwells and in which it is possible to hear his voice. Throughout her life, **Mary allowed herself to be led by the Spirit** and therefore flew on the wings of holiness, doing good to all those she met. In Mary, in her womb, and with Mary, thanks to her upbringing, the Son of God learnt to breathe and grow free. **Mary was therefore God's breath on this earth, the space of freedom and newness that God needed to renew creation from within.** In her womb the Spirit wove together the flesh and bones of the new man who redeemed us. In the Magnificat, this breath becomes a song, an exaltation of God's power of love that overthrows the powerful from their thrones, raises up the humble, satiates the

hungry and sends the rich empty-handed.

A story is told of Mother Mazzarello who, one evening, having to complete a tailoring job, decided to stop and sew after a good night, together with some sisters, by candlelight. Hearing Fr. Costamagna's step - and knowing his strictness to the rule - Mother blew out the candle, signalling to the sisters to be silent until the priest had passed on. Observance for its own sake, in short, does not belong to the Salesian charism, and there may be circumstances in which the transgression of a rule or an innovation in the rule is the only way to be faithful to God's call and the spirit of the charism. **"Do with freedom what charity requires,"** with these words Maria Domenica encouraged the sisters to put the concrete exercise of demonstrated love above the law. Of course, without rules, life together, in the family and in society, becomes impossible, but it must always be clear that rules serve to protect life and make it flourish. The moment a rule, a custom mortifies people, it means it is time for reform. Of course, **the first reality to be reformed is always our heart. The more we make ourselves inwardly free, free of judgements, prejudices, fears, rigidity, the more we will be able to contribute to that renewal of the Church and society that God also expects from us and that Pope Francis continually urges.**

Linda Pocher, FMA

## FAMILY EVENTS

### Video Invitation to Congress at Fatima

We would like to remind you that **the registration is now open for the 9th Congress of Mary Help of Christians to be held in Fatima from 29th August to 1st September 2024: [mariaausiliadora2024.pt](http://mariaausiliadora2024.pt).**

In view of this important gathering of the Salesian Family, the organising team has promoted a **series of nine videos** in which various personalities from the Salesian world invite everyone to participate. They are available at [this link](#).

### Mary Help of Christians: *From every corner of the world to Fatima*

From last November to February 2024, the meetings of the provincial delegates and members representing the different groups of the Salesian Family from the different regions in which the Congregation is organised around the world were held.

These meetings are part of the animation carried out by the world delegates of the Salesian Family and have the following objectives: **to share and reflect on the reality of the Salesian Family in the Region; to deepen the contribution that our charismatic identity is called to offer in a changing world; to promote a renewed relationship between the Salesian Family and Youth Ministry; to live an experience of communion and spirituality that strengthens the mission and shared formation; and to specify the steps for the Region's journey on the basis of reflection and good practices.**

We wanted to make use of these meetings to invite all members of the Salesian Family to participate in the 9th International Congress of Mary Help of Christians that will take place from 29th August to 1st September 2024, in Fatima (Portugal). As a concrete and symbolic sign, a small statue of Our Lady Help of Christians was brought from the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Valdocco to each meeting, which was blessed and donated during the celebration of the Eucharist to a member of the ADMA from each Region, with the intention that Mary could bring together a good group of members of our family from the region in which it



is located, and at the same time be able to lead the pilgrimage to Portugal this summer.

The ADMA dreams that these seven small statues placed all over the world can be brought to Fatima to symbolise the communion to which Mary invites us to live as Salesian Family of all continents, members of one universal Church and our local realities.

*“The whole Salesian Family is and feels like a Marian Family, born from the maternal solicitude of the Immaculate Help of Christians. All the Groups, in fact, express this conviction in their constitutional texts”* says Article 37 of the Salesian Family's charismatic letter. Let us therefore make use of this Congress to live in our lives what we profess.

See you all in Fatima.

## Portugal: *International Congress of Mary Help of Christians 2024 at Fatima*

In the spirit of solidarity and mutual aid that distinguishes us, a **'Solidarity Fund'** has been set up by the Turin Primary ADMA to help the groups most in need.

The amount received will be distributed among the various groups that request. There will not be contribution to individual participants.

*"The Lord loves a cheerful giver"*

All donations can be sent either by:

-ADMA bank transfer IBAN IT16 V030 6909 6061 0000 0130 575

- or by following the instructions at the following link <https://www.admadonbosco.org>

For any contribution, requests or for clarification, group leaders can write to: [adma@admadonbosco.org](mailto:adma@admadonbosco.org)



I will ·  
give you · the  
**TEACHER**  
IX Congress of Mary Help of Christians

Fatima 29 August - 1 September 2024

*Registration now open*

[www.mariaauxiliadora2024.pt](http://www.mariaauxiliadora2024.pt)

## ADMA Centres of Lisbon: *Renewed and active group*

The ADMA Centre at Lisbon renewed its Council at the beginning of 2023. Last December, the group met, as a family, at the church of Our Lady Help of Christians for the Christmas celebration. Present at the event was the whole ADMA Council, including the current spiritual animator, Fr. Artur Pereira; as well as 20 associates and three guests: the two parish priests and the previous spiritual animator, Fr. João Chaves.

The Lisbon ADMA group is a **very active one**, comprising six members and 44 associates, with the board of directors meeting every month, on the Saturday closest to the 24th, to revitalise the group and increase unity among everyone. The topics proposed are of general interest and opinions are shared.



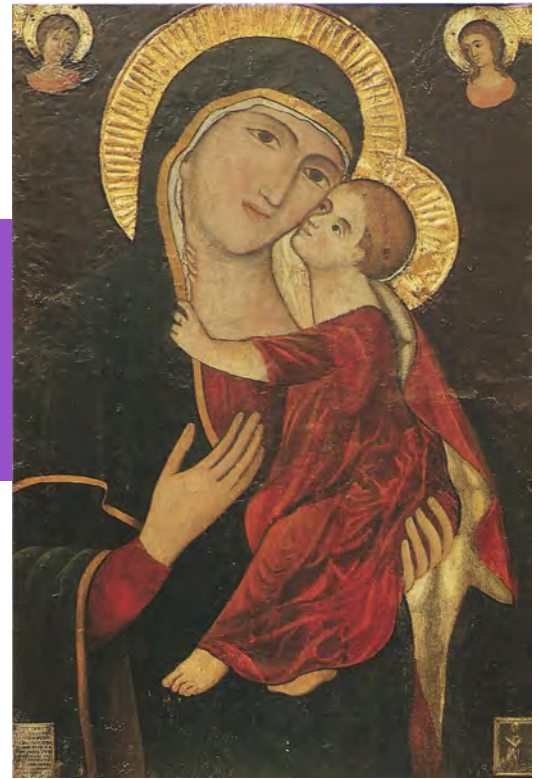
The monthly meetings have also resulted in constant fundraising to donate to the Pontifical Right Foundation **'Aid to the Church in Need'** (ACS).

## INTENTIONS FOR MONTHLY PRAYER

We wish to unite the prayers of all ADMA groups worldwide for a special intention.

This month we *pray for the new martyrs*.

*We pray that those in various parts of the world who risk their lives for the Gospel will inspire the Church with their courage and missionary zeal.*



**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](mailto: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). *By sending, you automatically authorise Adma to process, publish, even partially, and disclose the article and photographs in any form. The images may be published, at the editorial staff’s discretion, on the website [www.admadonbosco.org](http://www.admadonbosco.org), and/ or in other Adma websites, accompanied by a caption.*