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EDITORIAL

THE MADONNA IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Dear friends of ADMA,

we all remember the moment when Don Bosco made that famous statement to Fr. Cagliero:

“Our Lady wants us to honour her under the title of Auxilium Christianorum; the times are so bad that we need the Blessed Virgin to help us preserve and defend the Christian faith.” (MB VII, 334).

Each of us experiences and lives dramatic situations, unprecedented in today’s world: viruses, wars, poverty, injustice. The faith of Believers, the very life of the Church and the ministry of its Pastors is put to the test in the search for new social and political reforms, for the integral education of young people and for the promotion of the working classes.

If the devotion of Mary Help of Christians is a specific Marian dimension for times of difficulty, if Don Bosco and his Family were raised up by the Spirit as specialised and effective instruments to propagate devotion in the Church, today we are invited to relaunch Marian devotion in the face of the present difficulties of the Church and Society.

It may help us in this challenge to better understand the spiritual journey that our Founding Father experienced in the growth of his love for Our Mother. Don Bosco did not arrive at such devotion by chance, nor does it depend on a local apparition;

it rather appears as the maturation of an entire spiritual and apostolic line that has been clarified and developed with the contributions of certain historical circumstances, read in the light of a profound personal dialogue with the Holy Spirit, so familiar in the daily unfolding of Don Bosco's life.

Mary Help of Christians appears as the pinnacle of what Don Bosco felt about Mary: advocate, rescuer, mother of the young, protector of the Christian people, conqueror of the devil, triumphant over heresies, helper of the Church in difficulty, bulwark of the Pope and the Pastors undermined by the forces of evil.

Such devotion to the Mother of God is the practical

concretisation of that holiness of action that characterised Don Bosco's spirituality. It would be enough to think back of his dialogue with the painter Lorenzone, whom he asked to represent Our Lady at the centre of a whole gigantic ecclesial dynamism (MB VIII, 4) or to look at the current painting of the basilica of Valdocco to discover a connaturality between the Salesian spirit mixed with ecclesial apostolate and devotion to Mary Help of Christians.

We feel called today, with all the groups of the Salesian Family, to *make Our Lady known and loved, especially by the new generations of young people, who hunger and thirst for God's Love more than ever.*



“...Mary: advocate, rescuer, mother of the young, protector of the Christian people...”

Renato Valera,
ADMA Valdocco President.

Alejandro Guevara,
Spiritual Animator ADMA Valdocco.

FORMATIVE PATH

CHILDREN CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD. TRUST IN GOD

We surrender ourselves to the Holy Spirit, accompanied by Mary and imitating her: **this leads us to grow in trust in God.**

What does it mean **to trust in God**? It seems a very simple thing and in a way, it is; but it is not so 'natural'. Everyone who is going through life as an adult, in its various stages, has experienced the temptation and probably the reality of wanting to be 'self-sufficient'. In itself, this is good, but it becomes bad when, at the

end of the day, 'self-sufficiency' means that I want to be the one to guide my life, in the sense that I am convinced that I am the one who knows best what is good for me.

In this sense, Pope Francis reminded us that it is important to do what Naaman, the Syrian, did when he wanted to recover from leprosy. He had to accept to take off his grand and sumptuous robes he wore to go and bathe in the Jordan, like everyone else. Naaman

had to trust the prophet Elisha and put aside his pride and put on humility. So also, the Samaritan leper was able to turn back and thank Jesus. Lord Jesus is more important than everything, even the healing itself and the fulfilment of the rules! (cf. Francis, *Homily for the canonisation of St. John Baptist Scalabrini and St. Artemis Zatti*, 9 October 2022).

Trust in God, then, could be described as the deep (and growing) conviction that it is God who knows - better than me! - what is good for me. This is very easy to say or write, but not at all easy to live. It would suffice to examine a few examples of my prayer of request. What do I normally ask God for me? For example, when I do not feel well, I ask for health for me "to continue to serve him with joy". It is alright. But have I stopped for a moment to ask myself whether having good health, at this moment, is really the absolute best for me? It certainly is from a human point of view but is it also from the only point of view that matters - that of the Father?

When a loved one is seriously ill, we pray that he or she may regain health. But what if the only way for that person to be truly and totally in God's embrace is to go through that illness - and die of it? If I knew this, would I still pray for that loved one's health? Or would I not rather pray for the fulfilment of the Father's dream for him/her, come what may? Because the most important thing is not to have health or sickness, but to reach, at the end of the earthly experience, the Father's embrace. If I truly trust in God, my perspective changes. This does not mean that I stop praying for the needs of my life and the lives of my loved ones and the world, but that I learn to add to each request prayer a thought such as: 'if this is your dream, Father...'; 'if this is your will...'; 'I pray for N.N. to get well, if it will help him to reach you forever...' or similar prayers. A prayer of request without this very important 'addition', after all, is a bit like going to the Father like to a selling machine, not of drinks, but of graces! If we consider that prayer is like the coin I insert, when we do not get the grace, we may feel that the selling machine has 'stolen' my coin! This is **not** the God of Jesus Christ!

"Ah, then, this God is a cruel God!" Not at all! He is a God who puts himself at stake, because, in Jesus his Son, on the cross, the Father is close to all those who suffer and who are in difficulty, in ways that we human beings cannot even imagine. However, it takes

a profound attitude of reliance and this is difficult in the perspective of self-sufficiency. Indeed, it often becomes 'self-reliance' or 'selfishness'.

That is why Jesus asks us to become children!

In Matthew 18:2-4, the evangelist puts those very famous words on Jesus' lips:

"Then he called a little child to himself and set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Truly I say to you, unless you change and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever will become as little as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven...'"

It is a matter of 'becoming' children and not 'remaining' or even strictly speaking 'becoming' children again. **Becoming** indicates a lifelong process of growth - like any true spiritual process. Only an adult who entrusts himself to the Father, through Jesus, in the Holy Spirit, can 'become' a child... and the main characteristic of a child is that he **trusts** Daddy and Mummy. He is so certain of their love for him that he does not need anything else: neither power, nor position, nor recognition, nor 'self-sufficiency'. Living like a child in a world of cut-throat competition is not easy. We must be adults while maintaining the heart of a child, a heart that rests in God, that surrenders to God. He will know how to be our defender. He is our Father, He is faithful. We often fret instead of trusting in the Lord (*editor's note: adapted from words by the writer Jacques Philippe*).

A friend once recalled an adventure he had as a child. He must have been 5 or 6 years old and his family went for a walk in the mountains: it was a beautiful day and very tiring. On the path back to the place where they had left the car, he was feeling very tired. He also remembers his father taking him in one hand and his mother in the other and off down the path. He no longer knew whether he was walking or flying... They arrived at the car 'safe and sound'; he settled into the back seat and fell into a deep sleep all the way home. Many years after the event, my friend still used that image to describe what it is to trust in God: it is like walking on a mountain path with confidence, because daddy and mummy's hands hold me and will never allow me to fall and hurt myself... A childish image? On the contrary: a powerful image in its simplicity, for us adults who would like to do everything ourselves and tend to turn to the Father

only when we are in trouble.

The source of this style of trust, the model, is **Jesus** himself. In the Letter to the Hebrews, the sacred author puts these words on Jesus' lips:

“Therefore, entering the world, Christ says: ‘You wanted neither sacrifice nor offering, a body instead you prepared for me. Thou hast pleased neither holocausts nor sacrifices for sin.’

Then I said, ‘Behold, I come - for of me it is written in the scroll of the book - to do, O God, thy will.’ ”
 (Heb 10:5-7)

This is the context in which Scripture invites us to read the whole mystery of the Incarnation (cf. Luke 2), which is a very profound mystery of trust of the Son in the Father and of the Father in the Son. Jesus comes into the world not because he ‘likes it’ in a particular way, not to fulfil himself as a person, nor even to show us how good he is, but to do the Father’s **will**. This is the basis of the attitude of trust that will reach the highest level in Gethsemane (cf. Lk 22:42: *“Father, if you will, remove this cup from me! Yet not my will but Thy will be done.”*) and on the cross (cf. Lk 23:46: *“Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.”*)

Of course, once again, we see that this is an attitude that needs a long time to become second nature to us... It is important not to be discouraged if we see that we are still so far from this ideal.

If we take all this as a background to the Incarnation narrative in Luke 2, perhaps we can grasp the sense of development and fulfilment that we read between the lines in that chapter of the third gospel. Who knows why the census happens - and Joseph and Mary’s journey accordingly - just as Mary is pregnant and about to give birth? Could not a better time have been chosen? Could they not have found a place in an inn?

Oh yes, it was a full house because of the census... And the first witnesses? Could it be that they had to be shepherds - not very recommendable people according to the mentality of the time (they were always with the animals and then worked at night, like thieves...)?

Mind you, twice in this chapter of Luke a remark about



Mary is repeated: in v. 19 and then in v. 51b - “Mary, for her part, kept all these things, pondering them in her heart.” Here there is an important indication that comes to us precisely from Mary, the teacher, in **becoming like a child**: meditation, silent prayer. The mystery of Christ’s obedience can only be approached in this way: with prayer.

Mary, in turn, shows us how to accept God’s will. At the end of the story of the Annunciation, Mary comes out with that striking statement: *“Behold the handmaid of the Lord: let it be to me according to your word”* (Lk 1:38). What she understood, at that point, of all that was to happen to her was unclear. Certainly, it was not much.

How many questions must have passed through her mind and heart at that moment... And how many more during the journey of daily life, especially during the 30 years in Nazareth, when she must have asked herself: *“Is this really the Son of God?” “This child of mine who laughs and cries, who sleeps and eats, who falls and hurts his knees...? This boy whose eyes reflect the clarity of heaven but who does nothing special at all? Does he study like everyone else at the synagogue and learn his father’s trade? This young man who evidently has a big heart and loves everyone but does not seem interested in any girl of his age? What will become of him? What will become of that promise, almost thirty years ago?”*

Yet, Mary trusted and let God’s hand hold her through the journey of a lifetime. There were certainly many dark moments but Mary decided never to abandon the hand that she grasped the day she said her ‘yes’ – ‘the fiat’. And to do so, she chose the attitude of meditation and silent prayer.

One of the most privileged avenues of God's revelation - as he is - is precisely the mystery of the Virgin Mary. It is beautiful to see how Mary is present in the life of the world today. If we entrust ourselves to her, if we allow ourselves to be guided by her, she gives us access to true knowledge of God, because she introduces us into the depths of prayer and authentic trust. If we place ourselves totally in her hands, she educates us and communicates to us the **true knowledge of God** (*editor's note: adapted from words by the writer Jacques Philippe*).

In the light of the Strenna 2022 which invited us to rediscover the figure of St. Francis de Sales on the 400th anniversary of his death, it seems to me that we can find some interesting insights precisely on obedience and trust in God. The very title of the Strenna is taken from a letter of Francis to Joan Frances of Chantal. The precise point reads:

*"If you are very fond of the prayers you have indicated above, do not change; I beg you and if you seem to be giving up something I propose, do not have any scruples because the rule of our obedience, which I write to you in large letters, is: **DO EVERYTHING FOR LOVE, NOTHING FOR STRESS; IT IS BETTER TO LOVE OBEDIENCE THAN TO FEAR DISOBEDIENCE.**"* (Letter CCXXXIV. To the Baroness of Chantal, 14/10/1604, OEA XII, 359)

'It is better to love obedience than to fear disobedience'. These words give us a glimpse into Francis de Sales' approach to the subject of obedience. It only works in a context of total love and trust and cannot be based on the fear of doing wrong. It would be a bit like deciding to stop running or even walking because we might fall!

To do this, Francis de Sales suggests the very important path of prayer, as communication from the heart of man speaking to the heart of God. That God who is not only God of the human heart but also '*friend of the human heart*'. Therefore, through this type of prayer, it is a matter of loving God's will, of making the beating of our heart coincide with that of the Master... since prayer is not thinking much but loving much... (cf. Á. Fernández Artime, "**Do everything out of love, nothing by force**" *Strenna 2022* - pp. 22-23).

For personal prayer and meditation

- 1) In what areas of my life do I tend to be more 'self-sufficient' or even 'self-referential' and how do I combine this with my relationship with God?
- 2) How do I conceive of my prayer request? According to what parameters? And is it really done in the light of God's plan or only my own? Can I still discover moments in me when I address the Father as a 'selling machine' of graces?
- 3) At what point am I on my journey of becoming a child? How do I grasp the hand of God that holds me and how do I cling to it?
- 4) Do I try to imitate Jesus, basing my trust on my choice of obedience to the Father's will? How?
- 5) Do I reflect on Mary's human journey of faith, from the 'fiat' to Pentecost.
- 6) Do I love obedience rather than fear disobedience? Am I tempted, at times, to stop walking in order not to fall?
- 7) Is my personal prayer made of silence, increasingly becoming an experience of my heart speaking to the heart of God? Or is there still a lot of 'noise' and too much of me, too little of Him?

Monthly commitment

Add to each prayer request, we will add a thought such as:

"if this is your plan, Father..."
"if this is your will..."

KNOWING OURSELVES

ARTEMIDE ZATTI

A LIFE DEDICATED TO GOD AT THE SERVICE OF THE POOR WITH THE APOSTOLIC ZEAL OF DON BOSCO

Artemide was born in Boretto (Reggio Emilia) on 12th October 1880, the third of 8 children, to father Luigi and mother Albina. A poor family but rich in faith and affection. Forced by poverty, the Zatti family, at the beginning of 1897 (Artemide was 17), emigrated to Argentina and settled in Bahía Blanca. There were to be other 'migrations' in Artemide's life: the one from Bahia Blanca to Viedma, sick with tuberculosis travelling on the 'Galera' when it seemed that all his dreams were to vanish; when he migrated from the San Josè hospital to the Sant'Isidro hospital on a wagon adorned with flowers and amidst songs.

In Bahia Blanca, the young Artemide attends the parish run by the Salesians where Fr. Carlo Cavalli was the parish priest. Artemide found in him the father and spiritual director who oriented him to Salesian life.

At Viedma, he met Fr. Evasio Garrone who invited him to pray to Mary Help of Christians to obtain healing but also suggested to him to make a promise: *"If She heals you, you will dedicate your whole life to these sick people"*. Artemis gladly made this promise and miraculously recovered. He made his first profession as a Salesian coadjutor on 11th January 1908 and his Perpetual Profession on 18th February 1911, convinced that *"one can serve God both as a priest and as a coadjutor: one thing can be as good for God as the other, as long as one does it with vocation and love."*

Throughout his life, the hospital would be the place where he would exercise, day after day, a charity rich with the compassion of the Good Samaritan. When he woke the sick in the wards, his characteristic greeting was: *"Good morning. Long live Jesus, Joseph and Mary.. Is everyone breathing?"*

He routinely went out to the town of Viedma in his white coat and medicine bag, with one hand on the handlebar and the other with the rosary. He did everything for free. A farmer who wanted to express

his gratitude greeted him and said: *"Thank you very much, Mr. Zatti, for everything. I take leave of you and ask you to convey my best regards to your wife, although I do not have the pleasure of knowing her..."* *"Neither do I"*, Zatti replied, laughing heartily.

Artemide Zatti loved the sick, seeing and serving Jesus himself in them. One day he said to the cloakroom attendant: *"A change of clothes for Our Lord..."* Zatti sought the best for his patients because *"to Our Lord we must give the best."* A poor country boy needed a little dress for his first communion and Artemis asked: *"A little dress for Our Lord."*

He knew how to win everyone over and with his composure. He was able to resolve even the most delicate situations. One of the hospital doctors would testify: *"When I saw Mr. Zatti, my disbelief would waver."* And another: *"I have believed in God ever since I met Bro. Zatti!"*

In the community it was he who rang the bell. He was the one who preceded all the confreres in the community meetings. As a good Salesian, he knew how to make cheerfulness a component of his holiness. Always cheerfully smiling. That was how all the photos portrayed him.

In 1950, he fell from a ladder and during this accident, the symptoms of cancer appeared which he lucidly diagnosed. He died on 15th March 1951, surrounded by the affection and gratitude of the people of Viedma and Patagones, who from then on began to invoke him as an intercessor with God. The chronicle of the Salesian college in Viedma recorded these prophetic words: ***"One less brother at home and one more saint in heaven."***

The miracle for canonisation

The recognised miracle concerns the miraculous recovery of Renato, a Filipino, who suffered a 'right

Knowing ourselves

cerebellar ischaemic stroke, complicated by a voluminous haemorrhagic lesion' in August 2016. Due to worsening symptoms and the appearance of difficulty in walking, he was admitted to hospital. In the following days, as there was no improvement and he was disoriented and confused in his speech, he was transferred to intensive care.

Brother Roberto, a Salesian coadjutor, became aware of the serious situation and on the very day of his hospitalisation began praying during community vespers, asking for healing through the intercession of Blessed Artemide Zatti.

Subsequently, a neurosurgical check-up suggested the need for an operation which was not possible due to the family's poverty. Consequently, the family decided to take him home so that he could spend the last days of his life with his family. The dying man received the anointing of the sick and wanted to say goodbye to his family and relatives around him.

Roberto invited the relatives to join in prayer, intensely invoking Blessed Artemide Zatti.

On 24th August 2016, against all expectations, Renato took off the tube and oxygen, called his relatives saying he was well and wanted to take a bath and asked for something to eat. He was a man who had been brought home to die and was healthy again after a few days!

This miracle confirms the charisma of Artemide Zatti, called **'the relative of the poor'**. In fact, Artemide in his hospital in Viedma, Argentina, welcomed and assisted precisely those who could not afford the cost of medicines and hospitalisation.

The miracle did not only happen as a physical healing. The grace of God, in fact, while healing bodies touches the hearts and lives of people, renewing them in faith, in relationships, in witnessing a new life.

One day, one of the doctors at San José Hospital asked:

- "Bro. Zatti, are you happy?"
- "Very much. And you, doctor?"
- "I am not."
- "You see, each person carries happiness within himself/herself, is content and satisfied with what he/she has, even if it is little or nothing: this is what

the Lord wants from us. He will take care of the rest."

This is Bro. Zatti's wish and message to each one of us today. As he wrote in a letter to his father Luigi in 1908:

"I will not stand there enumerating the graces I have received. Well, you know them. I only put one before your eyes. That is, we can all love and serve God in this world and then enjoy Him forever in the next. Oh! What happiness then, to be able to be all together, without fear of ever being separated again!... Oh, yes, you must ask for this grace. And if sometimes we have to suffer something, be patient!... We will find our reward in heaven, if we have suffered for the love of our dear Jesus, and let us remember that the suffering is momentary and the enjoyment eternal."

Fr. Pier Luigi Cameroni,
Postulator General for the Cause
of the Saints of the Salesian Family



"Good morning. Long live Jesus, Joseph and Mary..."

ENTRUST - TRUST - SMILE

LETTER OF RECTOR MAJOR, FR. ÁNGEL FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME BE ROOTED IN EUCHARIST AND CLOSE TO MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS



“Mary Most Holy has always been
our Mother...”

(Don Bosco)

Mary assures us that if we are devoted to her, she will cover us with her mantle, shower us with her blessings in this world and await us in Paradise.

Don Bosco thought of the members as ‘devotees’: St. Francis de Sales teaches that ‘true devotion’ has to do with the authentic love we receive from God (grace) and makes us able to correspond to his gifts (charity).

The title of the first chapter of the letter remind us **that the worship of the Eucharist and the devotion to Mary Immaculate-Help of Christians are the fundamental points of the spirituality and life of the Association.**

The Rector Major continues:

“Christ who dominates Don Bosco’s existence is, above all, the living Jesus present in the Eucharist, the Bread of Life, the Son of Mary, Mother of God and of the Church. Don Bosco was strengthened by this presence and lived in this presence.”

From his youth, also thanks to the teachings of Mamma Margaret, Mary is strongly present in Don Bosco’s life. About her, Don Bosco said to the boys:

“Mary Most Holy has always been our Mother! A great support for you, a powerful weapon against the snares of the devil, dear youngsters, is your devotion to Mary Most Holy.”

We are true ‘devotees’ when we perform every action and every work, from the smallest to the greatest, with courage and readiness to give totally, each according to his or her vocation and mission in the Church.

It is therefore necessary to revive even today the path of devotion that allows us to aim high, not forgetting the roots of holiness and the Salesian charism.

The path at times is certainly tiring, slowed down by our weaknesses and frailties and tossed by the storms of life, but the Rector Major strongly emphasises that Mary Help of Christians along our way leads us to Jesus, guiding every step we take, through her maternal mediation. She is a wise teacher and accompanies us as a constant guide in fulfilling our mission every day.

Andrea and Maria Adele Damiani

4TH CENTENARY OF THE DEATH OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

PREPARED BY VISITATOIN MONASTERY OF MONCALIERI PRAYING ROSARY WITH ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

JOYFUL MYSTERIES

- **In the first Joyful mystery, let us contemplate on the Annunziatoin of the Angel to Maria.** From the Gospel according to Luke (cf. 1:26-37)

“The angel said to Mary: «Fear not, you have found favour with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive a son, and shalt call his name Jesus...» Then Mary said, «Behold, the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to thy word.»”

- For meditation

Mary submitted herself to God without setting any conditions. She surrendered herself totally to God's will without reserving anything for herself. Because of this perfect obedience, an expression of humility and the greatest love, she was able to receive the eternal Word of the Father into her womb.

- Invocation

Jesus, made man for us, grant us to welcome you into our hearts and our lives with the same faith as Mary. To Thee be glory and love for ever and ever. **Amen.**

- **In the second Joyful mystery, we contemplate Mary's visit to St. Elizabeth.** From the Gospel according to Luke (cf. 1:39-56)

“After receiving the angel's announcement, Mary rose and went in haste to a town in Judea, entered the house of Zechariah, and greeted Elizabeth.”

- For meditation

Mary went in haste to Elizabeth moved by humility and charity. For charity is never idle and generates energy and work in the hearts in which it dwells. Now, the Blessed Virgin was not only filled with love, but carrying in her womb the One who is all Love, had herself become love. Mary lived in continuous acts of love not only towards God but also towards her

neighbour whose salvation and every blessing she longed for.

- Invocation

Jesus, our salvation and source of joy, grant us to be docile to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit and be available to take you to our brothers and sisters. To Thee be glory and love for ever. **Amen.**

- **In the third mystery of joy we contemplate the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.** From the Gospel according to Luke (cf. Lk 2:1-21)

“While they were in Bethlehem, the days of childbirth were fulfilled for Mary. She gave birth to her first-born son, wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger... The angel said to the shepherds: I announce to you a great joy that will be for all the people: today is born to you a Saviour, Christ the Lord.”

- For meditation

God has joined himself to us with a union that surpasses all our understanding, indissoluble and infinite. He has entered into us wholly, and has, as it were, fused his greatness to mould it to the form of our littleness. He, who from eternity was God, will now also be man for eternity. And why would He take on this sweet and lovable condition of a little child if not to arouse in us a love filled with trust and a reliance on Him filled with love? God has lowered himself; those who lower themselves will see him more closely.

- Invocation

Jesus, born for us, grant us to adore Thee and to entrust ourselves to Thee, our only Saviour. To Thee be glory and love for ever and ever. **Amen.**

- **In the fourth Joyful mystery, we contemplate Jesus presented in the temple.** From the Gospel according to Luke (cf. 2:22-35)

“When the days of their purification were fulfilled, Joseph and Mary brought the child Jesus to the temple to offer him to the Lord according to the law... Simeon received him into his arms and blessed God.”

- For meditation

Jesus is brought to the temple to be offered to his Father as a perfect sacrifice in a sublime act of humility and obedience. Happy are those who have learned to offer themselves and all their actions to God in union with the Saviour! Simeon welcomes him into his arms. Let us also welcome him: on our lips to proclaim him to the world, in our arms to do good, on our shoulders to bear his yoke.

- Invocation

Jesus, offered to the Father, grant us, like Mary, to unite our lives to your sacrifice for the salvation of the world. To Thee be glory and love for ever and ever. **Amen.**

- **In the fifth Joyful mystery, we contemplate Jesus found in the temple.** From the Gospel according to Luke (cf. 2:41-52)

“Jesus’ parents, not having found Him in the congregation, returned to Jerusalem in search of Him... They found Him in the temple sitting among the teachers... His mother kept all these things in her heart.”

- For meditation

Mary and Joseph could not stop among relatives and friends, but in their grief they continued to seek the one object of their love and could not rest until they had found it. So, those who truly love God do not tire of seeking Him and His most holy will, and, without stopping at creatures or the satisfaction they can offer, are not satisfied until they have joined themselves to Him.

- Invocation

Jesus, found in the temple, grant that we may always seek Thee, true Wisdom. To Thee be glory and love for ever and ever. **Amen.**

FOR GRACES RECEIVED

INTERVENTION OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTAINS AT EAST TIMOR “ENOUGH, ENOUGH. GET BACK HOME”

TESTIMONY OF FR. ANDREW WONG SDB – 4 SEPTEMBER 1999

It was 4th September 1999, 23 years ago, in East Timor, where we have our Provincial House, our vocational school, a boarding house for boys, in the capital city of Dili... It was the month in which the last moment of the war between Indonesia and East Timor took place.

Many houses, schools and government buildings were destroyed. Several people were killed. Electricity was cut off. Our home became a place of refuge for our parishioners and other Timorese from other parishes and various parts of the capital. We were about 10,000 people inside our large compound.

That same morning of 4th September, a soldier from the Indonesian army came to me and told me that at night a group of army special forces would attack us and kill us all. The soldier was a friend of mine who sometimes met me to talk.

I asked him why we were going to be massacred? He said the reason was that we had several men in our house whom the soldiers were looking for because they were connected with the Timorese guerrillas.

His last words were: *“Father, you must protect yourself by any means possible. This group of special forces*

For graces received

is cruel and will kill you all!" He left and I never saw him until now.

We called the heads of families to discuss how we could defend ourselves. The men said they had machetes and spears. But what could they do with soldiers who had heavy weapons and grenades? In the end we all agreed that we, priests, four Salesian priests and one coadjutor, would negotiate when the soldiers arrived. We would open our iron gate and talk to the soldiers.

The heads of families and their families were supposed to stand a bit away from us and watch what would happen. If they saw us standing and talking to the soldiers, they had to remain calm. If they saw us falling, that is, if we were being shot at, then they and their families had to run towards the wall of our house, climb the wall and run towards the nearby hills. Everyone agreed on this decision.

The whole afternoon was spent building ladders so that the elderly, children and women could easily climb the wall and run towards the hills in case the negotiations failed. At 6 pm, our community director gathered all the people together and gave the general absolution. There was no time for individual confession.

Everyone felt the tension in the house. We continued to assure people to be calm. Deep inside me, I was sure that we would die and that the negotiation would never happen. But I continued to assure people of our safety and that we had to continue to pray. We exposed the Blessed Sacrament for a while and then hid the Eucharist in a safe place in the convent.

Around midnight, the director and I were taking our turn waiting for the soldiers to arrive. The others were lying down somewhere. Suddenly, we heard military trucks coming and the soldiers jumped out of the trucks and ran towards our gate. The event was so fast. Before we could even open our iron gate according to plan, the soldiers started shooting at the gate.

The impact of the bullets hitting our iron gate was so strong that the Director and I fell to the ground without opening the gate. I thought I had been hit but when I touched my body, there was no blood. I was still alive. I looked at the warden. He was also down on the floor

"...we thanked God for the intervention of our heavenly Mother..."



but there was no blood. We were both still alive.

Then a grenade was thrown from the other side. It fell right in front of my head. It didn't explode.

The other confreres and the people saw what happened to us. It was not according to our plan. The gate was closed. But we were on the ground so there was great confusion in the compound. The soldiers kept firing. Everyone was crying and no one could move or run because of the great fear and confusion. There was total chaos.

Suddenly, we all heard a woman's voice from the gate. It was a simple voice, loud enough for many of us who were standing near the gate to hear. She said, **"Enough, enough. Go home!"** Of course, the words were in the language of the soldiers, the Indonesian language. At that time, we all knew the Indonesian language.

Believe it or not, suddenly the chaos stopped. The soldiers stopped running towards our house. They couldn't open the gate. And then we heard the military trucks leave; the people stopped shouting and crying. There was suddenly an inexplicable calm and silence. Standing on the ground, I looked at the director and told him: **"Thank God, the Ursuline Sisters saved us and prevented the Indonesian soldiers from killing us."** The Ursuline sisters were Indonesian and stayed in their convent. They did not come to our place with the Timorese people. I told the director that we had to get up and go to their convent to thank them.

He told me it was better to wait until the next morning. We were all tired, scared, shocked and it was better

For graces received

to sleep until morning. It was three o'clock in the morning.

Around six o'clock that morning, 5th September, the director and I ran to the Ursuline Sisters' convent. When we opened our gate, we saw all the bullets on the ground. When we arrived at the convent, we wanted to speak to the nuns to thank them for saving us that night.

The nuns were so surprised and almost began to cry. One sister said, *"Father, we were so afraid last night. So, we stayed in one room together. We also heard the voice. It wasn't our voice. It wasn't our voice."*

The Director and I fell to our knees in tears and **thanked God for the intervention of our heavenly Mother. We believed it was Our Lady who had stopped the soldiers and saved us from the massacre.**

Fr. Andrew wong, Sdb.

If you have received a grace, send a short testimony accompanied by a photo to adma@admadonbosco.org

FAMILY EVENTS

Indonesia: Promise of 9 members of ADMA



Jakarta, Indonesia – 24th September 2022, in the community of the Salesian Post novitiate of Sunter, in the norther province of Jakarta, 9 members of ADMA made their promise.

The Eucharistic celebration over by Fr. Lino Belo, Vicar of the Vice province "St. Luigi Versiglia" of Indonesia.

Sicilia, Calatabiano: First Retreat

On Monday 17th October, the ADMA of Calatabiano started again with a retreat at the Capuchin friary in Piedimonte Etneo!

Under the guidance of the parish priest, Fr. Salvatore Sinitò, the members prayed and meditated on the theme *"Listening to the Word of God: Mary chose the best part"*



Philippines: 40th National Convention of ADMA

The Association of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA) of the Philippines celebrated its 40th National Convention, held on 15th October 2022 at the National Shrine of Mary Help of Christians in Paranaque City. The theme of this year's celebration, **'ADMA, Living the Salesian Way and Serving with Love'**, was inspired by the commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the death of St. Francis de Sales, and urged **ADMA members**



to continuously commit themselves to love, live and serve others, having Mother Mary as their model and guide. Fr. Nestor Impelido, SDB, former ADMA National Delegate and Spiritual Animator of the Northern Province of the Philippines (FIN), was the guest speaker.

The national conference was attended by some 200 ADMA members from eighteen (18) chapters actively present in different parts of the country. In addition, thanks to the support of Fr. Godofredo Atienza, SDB, the Salesian Family and the ADMA Delegate of the Southern Philippine Province (FIS), three (3) ADMA FIS members together with Fr. Rooney John Undar, SDB, were able to attend the National Convention.

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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