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EDITORIAL

“CHRISTMAS WITH THE QUEEN OF PEACE”

Dear ADMA friends

In the last few weeks, I had the joy of participating in some meetings with provincial delegates, spiritual animators, local assistants of the various groups of the Salesian Family in three different continents: America, Asia and Europe. They were moments of fraternity, formation and communion among us who form the Don Bosco family. **We have all truly received a great gift, the Salesian charism which is incarnated in different and creative ways in the different parts of the world.** In particular, the Association of Mary Help of Christians is very much alive in these regions; in many places new groups of devotees continue to be formed; others consolidate their activities, spreading the devotion to Mary and to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and putting themselves at the service of the local community in every need. The ADMA is a lay group of our family, founded by Don Bosco, available to all those who wish to live, like Mary, a path of sanctification and apostolate in the characteristic style left to us by Don Bosco.

During these weeks I have been able to get in touch in a simple way with the social, religious and political situation that is experienced in many places in our world, and thus get close to realities that speak of violence, war, injustice, murder, suicide, revenge etc. I have been shocked by these realities that I have

experienced. This is why in this month of December, when we celebrate the birth of the King of Peace, it seems appropriate to present you my reflection on the Loretta litany of Mary, Queen of Peace, with an **invitation to all to live a Christmas of peace, building PEACE in our families and in our environments.**

We know from the prophets in the Sacred Scripture that Jesus is the Messiah, the **“Prince of Peace”**. Psalm 71 tells us that *“in his days, justice and the abundance of peace will dawn”* (71:7). This is why the liturgy states that Christ’s kingdom is *“a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace”*. Therefore, the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Messiah, can and must be called **‘Queen of Peace’** and **‘Mother of Mercy’** too. And since war always causes so much blood and fire, death and orphans, famine and pestilence and, what is worse, hatred and rancour, her heart of mercy cannot fail to be moved when she sees her children as victims of these evils, and she is always ready to pray that they may be filled with the efficacious and unique remedy of peace.

It is the prophet Isaiah, in announcing the coming of the Messiah, who tells us that he will be called *“the Prince of Peace, that his dominion will be great and that there will be no end”* (9:5-6). Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, in his song announcing the imminent coming of the light from on high, tells us that his mission is to *“direct or guide our steps in the way of peace”* (Lk 1:79). And St. Paul goes so far as to say: *“He is our peace”* (Eph 2:14). Now, **if Christ is our peace, Mary is the Mother of peace.** Her virgin birth was a birth of peace.

St. Paul also presents to us Christ on Calvary *“making peace, through the blood of his cross, with all things, both in heaven and on earth”* (Col 1:20). Christ is the great

peacemaker. The Gospel of John presents us with Mary beneath the cross of Jesus. She was not only the creature most perfectly redeemed by Christ - being without guilt or stain of sin - but when she offered her own sorrows to the Father, together with the blood of her Son, on Calvary, she was associated in a special way with the peace-making mission of Christ.

The Word of God is rich and clearly alludes to the peace brought by the Child Jesus who is born in our midst. But we see that this reality has not yet been fully realised and we are invited to contemplate on it in order to welcome and grow in evangelical attitudes.

In addition to the Holy Scriptures, history reminds us that it was Pope Benedict XV, when Europe was looking red because of World War I, who asked for a new invocation to be introduced into the Litany of Loreto, with the intention that the Blessed Mother through her intercession would put an end to that bloody conflict. Since then, she has been invoked daily by millions of devout believers, **‘Queen of Peace’**.

And she did so with these words on 5th May 1917, addressing all the bishops of the world: Since all the graces that the Author of all good deigns to bestow on the poor descendants of Adam, through the loving design of His Divine Providence, distributed by the hands of the Blessed Virgin, we desire that to that Great Mother of God, in this hour more terrible than ever, the supplication of her most afflicted children should rise up alive confidently [...] “Arise, so much, in the name of God, for the salvation of his children [...] “Arise therefore to Mary, who is Mother of mercy and Almighty by grace, from all the places of the earth, from the noblest temples to the smallest chapels, from royal palaces to the poorest hovels, wherever there is a faithful soul, from the bloody fields and seas, the pious and devout invocation [“Regina pacis, ora pro nobis”], and may the anguished cry of mothers and wives, the wail of innocent children, the sigh of all well-born hearts reach her. May her sweet and kindly solicitude be moved, and may the peace prayed for be obtained for this troubled world. And may future centuries remember the efficacy of her intercession and the greatness of the benefits obtained through her”.

A few days later, on 13th May 1917, the ‘Regina



pacis' answered the call of Pope Benedict XV and the whole Church and appeared in Fatima to three children playing in the Cova da Iria. *"I come from heaven... I have come to ask you to come here for six months in a row, on the 13th, at this very hour.... Do you wish to offer yourselves to God to endure all the sufferings He wills to send you, as an act of expiation for the sins by which He is offended and of supplication for the conversion of sinners? Pray the Rosary every day to obtain world peace and an end to war..."*.

We can truly see once again how Mary listens to the prayers we address to her with a simple and humble

heart for the good of her people. **In these days, we want to live the birth of Jesus as a prayer that asks and implores the God of Life to bring PEACE into our hearts, to all the people of the world, and that conflicts and tensions disappear to make way for the peaceful will of the Creator. Merry Christmas and PEACE to all.**

Renato Valera,
 ADMA Primaria's President.

Fr. Alejandro Guevara,
 ADMA Primaria's Spiritual Animator.

FORMATIVE PATH

The call to the impossible 2:

LIGHT AND SHADOW OF EVERY VOCATION AND MISSION

Vocation and mission: the presence of mystery.

In the dream at 9, which lies at the origin of the entire Salesian mission, John experiences what the Bible attests to in all vocation stories, especially those of special consecration: a **mixture of astonishment and disturbance** because of the disproportion between human possibilities and what seems impossible to human person, between what is natural and what is supernatural, between the carnal human being and the spiritual human person, between the logic of calculation and that of gratuitousness, between human's few resources and the superabundance of God's gifts. The **dialectic of possible and impossible** is then experienced as a **dialectic between clarity and obscurity**, hence the whole theme of **faith** and the need for **discernment**: "do not put faith in every inspiration, but test the inspirations, to see whether they really come from God" (1 Jn 4:1), and "examine everything, hold fast to what is good" (1 Ts 5:21). Inevitable, because in the things of God, understanding is not the first step, if ever the last: the first is to recognise and obey God's will. "In due time, you will understand everything", little John is lovingly told.

The two dialectics manifest themselves whenever the mystery of God makes itself present to human consciousness. Since divine inspiration is greater

than us and exceeds the possibilities of our reason, the double question immediately arises as to its **source** and **content**. Indeed, in the dream, John wants to know who it is that speaks to him and how it is possible what he is asked: "who are you that command me what is impossible?". It is interesting to examine the answer of the two mysterious characters. But in the meantime, let us say it: no spiritual path takes off and matures if it does not expose itself to the mystery of God, if it does not allow itself to be bewildered by his supernatural character, if it remains reliant on its own natural gifts and limitations, if it places limits on providence, thus mortifying its own possibilities. On this point, the Lord has been clear. Twice, in Mathew's Gospel, he repeats: "the one who has, shall be given, and he shall have an abundance; and from the one who has not, shall be taken away even what he has" (Mt. 13:12 and 25:29). It happens too often, however, that many spiritual impulses, as well as many conversions, remain deadened by considerations that are either too material or too emotional. This is why, Don Bosco would tell his young people: "you must give yourself to God in good time", otherwise the heart would be filled with 'ifs' and 'buts' that compromise God's dream! Put differently: it is all right to look 'inside', but it is never all right to look 'on': the recollection of prayer that recognises the voice of God is one thing, the narcissistic withdrawal into oneself is another.

Even John, despite all the supernatural signs, struggled to understand his own vocation and mission. In fact, in the dream at 9, John experiences an ever-increasing tension of soul, which denotes the difficulty in giving credence to the inspirations. The questions are pressing: “who are you ... where, by what means? ... who are you? ... tell me your name”. As can be seen, the questions concern the mission and focus on the identity of the person and the feasibility of the mandate. The answers, however, do not erase the climate of mystery: they do not give information but **demand a change in the way of thinking and acting**.

The tension provoked by the request for change becomes inner resistance, and takes the form of a twofold objection: inadequacy (“poor and ignorant child, incapable of talking about religion”) and the difficulty in understanding (“I did not know what was meant”). The first objection is answered by indicating **the means that make the impossible possible: obedience and science/wisdom**: “precisely because such things seem impossible to you, you must make them possible by obedience and the acquisition of knowledge”. The second objection is answered with a postponement to the future, because what is not clear now, will be so in due time: “in due time, you will understand everything”. As we can see, the obedience of faith discloses the intelligence of faith, because faith is precisely the right way to know God, the right way to welcome God’s promises, the right way to live the commitment of the present in the light of future fulfilment. Of course, everything is paradoxical - paradox is the typical sign of mystery! - “since the answers in essence state that only by obeying the command will it become fully clear what it really requires” (A. Bozzolo).

2. The obedience of faith

Obedience - by which is meant filial obedience, that of Jesus, that of Mary, that of the Saints, that which is belonging and recognising, trust and confidence, loyalty and collaboration - is the right thing, because when it comes to vocation and mission, **it is not a question of understanding and knowing, but of living an intimate and fruitful relationship with God**, where one’s own will is united with God’s will, and where one’s intelligence is illuminated by God’s wisdom. Then, the miracle happens. God’s power can be expressed in our weakness, and our works in Him are none other than His works in us! It is the ideal of the life of grace: “you in me and I in you”, so that



there may be love and joy, efficacy of prayer and fruitfulness of works (cf. Jn 14:20; 15:4; 15:5; 17:21-22).

The obedience of faith **makes the impossible, possible**: to move the mountains of pride, to heal from all kinds of illnesses, to obtain salvation and eternal life. This is what the Lord says: “If you had faith as much as a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree: “be uprooted and planted in the sea, and it would listen to you” (Lk 17:6)! Obeying is always the right thing to do, because truly - as John experiences in the dream, and with him every one who is called - the mission totally exceeds our strength, but it is made possible by the fact that it does not rely on our abilities, which must be totally brought into play, but on the power of the Risen Lord and His Spirit.

The testimony of the great characters in the Bible is in complete agreement (cf. Heb 11:1-40). It is ‘Impossible’ for Abraham to have a son by a barren and old woman like Sarah; It is ‘Impossible’ for the Virgin to conceive and give birth to the world: the Son of God made man; Disciples think, salvation is ‘impossible’, if it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.” Yet Abraham answers: “is anything impossible for the Lord?” (Gen 18:14); the angel tells Mary that “nothing is impossible to God” (Lk 1:37); and Jesus replies to the unbelieving disciples that “what is impossible to men is possible to God” (Lk 18:27). Even the supreme place of Redemption is marked by the impossible: for how is it possible to conquer death? This, then, is what the obedience of faith is: **allowing Jesus to turn our views of what is possible** upside

down, because God, by raising his Son made man in the power of the Spirit, has broken through the limit of our human possibilities and opened them up to his divine possibilities! Of this every believer should be firmly convinced: having opened from within the frame of our limitation and our transience, the Lord's Incarnation and Resurrection are the most real things that exist, the things we can always count on without reservation.

It is interesting to note that obedience is so much the right thing. On closer look, it is **the most basic thing that children are taught. It is the fundamental attitude of Jesus towards the Father.** The venerable man in the dream addresses John as one would address a child: "because such things seem impossible to you, you must make them possible by obedience". They sound like the words with which parents exhort children when they are reluctant to do something they do not feel capable of or do not feel like doing: "obey and you will see that you succeed." But they are also, and much more, the words with which the Son reveals the secret of the impossible, his obedience: "my food is to do the will of him who sent me and to do his work" (Jn 4:34), and "He who sent me is with me and has not left me alone, because I always do the things that are pleasing to him" (Jn. 8:29).

The most basic reason why obeying is important is that God can carry out his dream on us only if he can get us to **change our mindset and attitudes.** When faced with adversities and setbacks, we usually react instinctively, impulsively, immaturely, even immorally. It is too easy to go 'hand in hand' with unjust things, perhaps feeling righteous. However, Moses (Ex 2:11-15) and Jeremiah (Jer 1:4-9) accepted to go beyond their feeling of being too young. Peter definitively overcame the sin and shame of betrayal (Jn 21:15) and again and again 'cast his nets' on the word of Jesus (Lk 5:5); and Paul, who had been a "persecutor and a violent man" (1Tim 1:13), learnt to "make himself all things to all men, to save someone at any cost" (1Cor 9:22). So, John Bosco too, strong and impulsive as he was, had to obey to **learn to repress evil not with violence but with benevolence:** "not with beatings, but with meekness". The fruit of obedience is an authentic inner transformation, which leads us to overcome the pretence of changing things with the generosity of our spontaneous impulses or with the strength of our natural gifts, in order **to enter into the style with which God** acts in history and in our hearts.

It is therefore important to point out a risk that is always present in the obedience of faith: that of **continuing to rely on one's own strengths or despairing of one's limitations.** It is a risk that John, significantly, does not take! John was humanly gifted from all points of view: extraordinary physical vigour, excellent memory, the makings of a leader and a contagious gaze. Yet he himself recognised that the mission was a call to the impossible. Fr. Bozzolo explains well: "*It is not on the level of natural aptitudes that the demand for the impossible is played out here... Beyond this frontier, the region of the impossible opens up, which is, however, biblically, the space for God to act.*"

3. The intelligence of faith

We were saying: **obedience sharpens intelligence.** It is guaranteed, because it comes from above and compensates the inadequacy/impossibility of the one called with an offer of present and future light that makes the shares of obscurity sustainable. But, precisely, this guarantee is ensured by obedience: **the mission, however arduous and obscure it may appear, must be carried out in order to be understood.** This is the character of injunction that every vocation carries with it.

It is not surprising, then, that in the dream, the dialectic of **possible and impossible** is intertwined with that of **clarity and obscurity.** In the dream, in fact, the confusion of John's soul contrasts with the luminous face of the Lord; the face so luminous that John is unable to sustain his gaze. It is a dialectic, typical of the great callings, particularly present in the lives of mystics, and it is the experience of **a tenebrous light and a luminous darkness:** it says that however great the knowledge of God, His mystery is even deeper. The basis of this paradoxical experience lies in the two faces of the Paschal Mystery, which is always cross and joy, the raising of Jesus to the Cross and the raising of Jesus to Glory. In the fourth Gospel, John uses only one word for both elevations: "when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself" (John 12: 35).

It is still interesting to note that in the dream, in addition to the luminous face of the Lord, John receives the gift of luminous words: both the man and the woman clearly explain what John has to do, and yet leave him confused and frightened. There is also a very clear image, the transformation of wolves into lambs, which however leads to even greater incomprehension. There is, therefore, no

explanation that holds, no knowledge that can anticipate obedience: one cannot secure life before living or without living, because at stake is God's immensity, his greater justice, his infinite love. It is precisely through the obedience of faith that the meaning of an entire life is clarified.



Indeed, this dialectic of light and darkness, and the practical form of its clarification, characterise the theological structure of the act of faith. To believe, in fact, is to walk in a luminous cloud, which shows man the path to take but deprives him of the possibility of mastering it with his gaze. If Abraham is called 'our father in faith', it is because to walk in faith is to do as Abraham did who 'set out without knowing where he was going'; certainly not in the sense of moving haphazardly, but in the sense of moving

under God's blessing 'to a place he was to receive as an inheritance' (Heb 11:8). In faith, it is like this: the promised land cannot be known in advance, because the willingness to walk contributes to its existence. Mary's words to John - "*in due time you will understand everything*" - are therefore not just benevolent maternal encouragement, but truly contain the maximum amount of light that can be offered to those who must walk in faith (A. Bozzolo).

In the light of the dream, we can ask ourselves:

1. What is the **level of my faith**? Do I know that nothing is impossible for God? That he who believes, sees? That a grain of genuine faith is enough to see miracles? That Mary is Mother and Teacher in the faith? That obeying is better than doing one's own way? In what is life asking me to trust, to rely on? In what does God have to win in me, in what to break down resistance, in what to untie knots?

2. Do I accept the nature of **faith leaning on God's wisdom and power**? Do I know that 'though I walk through the valley of darkness, I need fear no evil, for he is with me'? Do I unceasingly ask for patience and hope in times of trials, so as not to give in to pessimism and discouragement?

NAZARETH, GOD'S FAMILY

3. THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS

In the previous reflection, we saw that what determines the essence of the **Holy Family** and every family is Jesus, his presence, his name. Now we want to dwell, as the Church does at the end of the Christmas season - especially from the 14th century onwards with the institution of the liturgical feast desired by Clement VII and promoted with great apostolic vigour by St. Bernardine - on the '**Most Holy Name of Jesus**'.

Jesus of Nazareth

The name of Jesus, the Son of God, resounded for the first time in Nazareth. It resounded on the pure lips of Mary and Joseph. And it was pronounced by divine mandate. First, Mary is told by the Angel: "you shall

give birth to him and call him Jesus" (Lk 1:30). And it is then to Joseph, in a dream, that another angel makes the announcement: "your wife will give birth to a son and you shall call his name Jesus" (Mt 1:21). Everything happens by divine inspiration, "by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Lk 1:35 and Mt 1:20), not by the will of man. **Jesus is the human name that the Father wanted for the Son!** Jesus is the divine name that every Christian heart recognises as Lord!

Nomen Omen

In ancient cultures, the name tells the reality. Let us consider the name of Jesus. Jesus! A very sweet and at the same time very uncomfortable name, because it indicates, prefigures, carries within itself a most painful mission. **It is the name of the One who**

Nazareth, God's family

will be our Redeemer. He is called Jesus because - Simeon explains to his Mother - "he is here for the ruin and resurrection of many in Israel", as a **"sign of contradiction"** (Lk 2:34), and because - the Angel tells Joseph - "he will save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:21). For, 'Jesus' means 'God saves', and to say 'Jesus' is to say 'Saviour'!

Truly, the name of 'Jesus' speaks of his identity of God with us and indicates his mission among us. **Hence, the symbolic importance and extraordinary power of the sign 'IHS'** (Greek abbreviation of *lesous*) that the Christian tradition imprints on hosts, church walls, liturgical objects, and Christian tombs. Obviously, it is not a question of a magical power, but of the power of faith: because 'God' is not an anonymous power, but a personal power, and it bears a precise name, the Name of Jesus, **"the name that is above every other name"** (Phil 2:9), the name in which "every knee bends in the heavens and on earth (Phil 2:10). Already, the prophecies and the psalms said it: "the peoples shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth your glory" (Ps 101:16). St. Peter said it, with moving solemnity, in the first Christian homily, on the day of Pentecost: "In no other is there salvation; for there is no other name under heaven given to men in which it is appointed that we should be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Praise the name of the Lord!

Praising the name of the Lord is the most succinct way to speak of Christian prayer. This is how praise is said in Holy Scripture: "Praise, ye servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord. Blessed be the name of the Lord, now and forever" (Ps 112:1). Prayer can take many forms. It is above all praise and blessing, adoration and thanksgiving addressed to Jesus, in whose Name, God has enclosed and distributed all his treasures of grace.



As prayer expresses, so is faith: the Christian believes precisely in the Name of Jesus (1 Jn 3:23), and by virtue of his Name, he finds remission of sins (1 Jn 2:12); in his Name, he finds life (Jn 20:31) and

bears his Name on his forehead (Rev 22:4); only in his Name does he offer sacrifices pleasing to God (Heb 13:15), and all his works he does in the Name of the Lord (Rom 1:5 and Col 3:37). It is the same for the Apostle: he dedicates his life to the Name of Jesus (Acts 15:26), he proclaims the Name of Jesus, and in His Name, he teaches with authority and courage, even to the point of saying he is glad to be outraged for the Name of the Lord (Acts 5:41); in His Name, he performs wonders (Acts 8:12), and in His Name, he knows he can ask and obtain anything (Jn 16:23, 24).

From the life of Nazareth, we can learn at least the following three things:

- 1. To be familiar with the Name of Jesus:** to pronounce it with affection and gentleness, to say it frequently in order to remain in his presence, to keep alive the relationship with him, to act in his name and for his sake, to invoke it with confidence in times of trial;
- 2. Acknowledging the redemptive power of the Name of Jesus:** just to pronounce his holy name is to fight against evil, to quash the power of temptation, to side with God, to bring victory over the enemy. It is well known that the very names of Jesus and Mary have an exorcistic power: the devil cannot stand them!
- 3. Praising the Name that is above every other name:** to call the Lord by His name is to recognise and at the same time bring His majesty closer, it is to enter more quickly into prayer, into trust in Him, into opening one's heart to the action of grace.

HUMBLE AND HIGHEST CREATURE

In our Pilgrimage with Mary, Teacher of Integrale Ecology

4. MARY – SEALED FOUNTAIN

Pope Francis concludes article 241 of the Encyclical *'Laudato Si'*, dedicated entirely to Mary's care for creation, by inviting us to ask for her help in learning *"to look at this world with wiser eyes"*. Mary's wise eyes, in fact, know how to recognise in every element of Creation a sign of God's love for us. Living ecological conversion means, first of all, becoming capable of this gaze, from which we can recognise in respect and care for the environment and our neighbour, the fundamental call that God addresses to each of his creatures.

The first element of Creation on which we want to try to cast a wise glance, together with Mary, is water. The first account of Creation (Gen. 1), presents the universe before God's creative act as a formless, deserted mass, shrouded in darkness and covered by primordial waters. In this primordial *chaos*, God intervenes with his creative Word to give birth to the world, separating the dry earth from the water. *Chaos becomes cosmos*: order, harmony, a hospitable place for life.

The habitable world that we know, marked by the alternation of day and night and the passing of the seasons, the world covered with vegetation and inhabited by a multitude of living beings, was, before creation, enshrined in God's thought and desire, just as a still shapeless child, newly conceived, rests in the dark immersed in amniotic fluid, contained in the mother's womb.

This analogy between the creation of the universe and the formation of the child in the womb is taken up by Scripture in Psalm 139, which describes God's creative work with every human being: while growing in the womb, the child is at the centre of the universe and it is in the womb that the first encounter between the human being and God takes place, according to Scripture (Jer 1:5).

Birth, because of the risks involved for the mother and the child, is the first act of salvation that God performs for every creature (Ps 21:10-11), so much so that Scripture uses this very metaphor to narrate the great event of liberation, the Exodus: the crossing of the Red Sea, in fact, is a great birth scene. Like an experienced midwife, God delivers the people from

the danger of death and ushers them into a new life (Ex 14). He draws them from the waters to dryness.

Every human being, although he has no conscious memory of it, came from the water, grew up in the water and fed in the water of the womb until he was old enough to breathe on his own. Water is the element that mediated, throughout the entire pregnancy, between the growing baby and the mother who cared for it. It is perhaps also for this reason that the Song of Songs compares the woman's womb to a spring, to which the man longs to return.

In chapter 4, verse 14 in particular, the beloved sings of the virtue of his beloved, calling her a *'sealed fountain'*. Ever since the time of the Fathers of the Church, Christians have seen in this verse a poetic description of Mary's fruitful virginity: her womb is a 'sealed fountain'; in that, it has received none other than the child Jesus. Christian virginity, however, Mary's virginity in particular, is not closure. It is not merely renunciation. In fact, if we continue reading the Canticle, we read in verse 15 that from this 'sealed fountain' comes forth a water that irrigates a multitude of gardens, and in chapter 5, verse 1, the beloved invites his friends to satiate and quench their thirst with the beauty and virtue of his beloved.

The 'sealed fountain', then, is not a source from which one cannot drink; quite the contrary: it is a *source of pure*, uncontaminated water, whose water is not reserved for some, but is offered to all. Although she had no other children in the flesh, apart from Jesus, Mary's motherhood expanded beyond the boundaries of the space and time in which she lived. Her tenderness, her wisdom, quenches the thirst of all who entrust themselves to her. Similarly, our way of loving in our daily relationships in the family, with friends, in the community, requires purity of intention, great



Humble and highest creature

respect and not closure: the gifts of virtue and grace that we have received from God, first and foremost the gift of life itself, are given to us to be offered to the world.

In his preaching, Jesus himself uses the symbol of water, particularly to indicate the gift of the Spirit and the grace of rebirth that the believer receives through Baptism. Referring clearly to the words with which the beloved refers to the beloved in the Canticle, in John's gospel, Jesus promises the Samaritan woman an inner spring of living water gushing forth for eternal life (John 4:14). In Chapter 7, Jesus renews this promise by addressing all those who are willing to listen to him, while he is in the Temple crowded with people who have come for the feast: "Whoever is thirsty, let him come to me and drink; as the Scripture says, rivers of living water will flow from his bosom" (Jn 7:38). And immediately the evangelist comments: *"This, he said referring to the Spirit that believers would receive in him: for there was not yet the Spirit, because Jesus had not yet been glorified"* (Jn 7:39).

This emphasis is important, because it helps us understand two things: the first is that the disciples themselves, although living in close contact with Jesus, did not always understand his gestures and words. To understand that the promised living water is the Spirit, they had to wait for Jesus' resurrection:

only in the new faith of Easter did they find the courage to finally open themselves to the gift of a truly new life.

Secondly, these words invite us to recognise in the gift of the Spirit the possibility of sharing the intimate communion of the Father with Jesus, which was fully manifested at Easter, when a river of living water gushed forth from the open side of the Son on the cross (Jn 19:34). That wound, moreover, remains open forever, so that we can always go and draw from it, until the water also becomes a living spring in each of us for eternity.

The second account of Creation states that four great rivers flow from the Garden of Eden, irrigating the whole world (Gen 2:10). Water, in fact, is life. Without water, the earth dries up, creatures die. Thus, if God were to remove his Spirit from the world, everything would wither. But God promises his creatures both: water and the Spirit. Yet the experience of water scarcity and pollution is there for all to see, and affects especially the poorest of the poor. We have received the gift of life and we continually receive the gift of the Spirit: we are responsible, so that no living person should ever again die of thirst or disease caused by the poisoning of springs. Let us ask Mary to help us to do quickly and well, all that is within our power!

FAMILY EVENTS

Ecuador – 12th National Congress of ADMA

Cumbayá, Ecuador - October 2023 - From 20th to 22nd October at the Spirituality Centre "María Auxiliadora" in Cumbayá, the 12th National Congress of ADMA took place. The event was centred on the theme *"Eucharistic Jesus gives us Mary as mother and teacher"*, and was led by Fr. Alejandro Guevara SDB, ADMA's World Spiritual Animator.

The aim of the three-day meeting was to strengthen the fraternity and the Eucharistic and Marian spirituality of this branch of the Salesian Family, in order to renew its evangelizing and pastoral commitment in the places where it is present, as a living witness in the mission. In Ecuador, ADMA is



Family events

present in 8 regions, with 27 centres and a total of 845 members. The opening ceremony was attended also by Fr. Marcelo Farfán, Superior of the Salesian Province of Ecuador (ECU), who underlined how ADMA is an essential movement in the spirituality of the Congregation and the Salesian Family. During his speech, Fr. Alejandro Guevara stressed

the importance of authentic devotion and the propagation of devotion to Mary Help of Christians at a local level: ***“I believe that these days of meeting should be an invitation to share life with one another as brothers and sisters and to look at our reality with Mary’s eyes”.***

33rd Marian Day of ADMA, on the theme *“Education as Vocation and Mission”*

Turin, Italy - October 2023 - On the 8th of October, the 33rd Marian Day took place, on the theme *“Education as Vocation and Mission”* in which the members of the primary Association of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA) of Turin as well as a large group of members from Arese and Liguria participated.

The day was characterised by a formative moment led by Fr. Enrico Stasi, who taking up Don Bosco’s ‘dream at the age of 9’ emphasised, among other things, how the ‘courtyard’ is still a privileged place of encounter between young people and God. This was followed by a time of prayer and personal reflection and the recitation of the Rosary in the Valdocco courtyard. **All the new aspiring members were presented**, followed by testimonies of life and faith from some of them, who passionately shared their journey of discernment with the participants. The day ended with the celebration of the Eucharist,



presided by Fr. Enrico Stasi and concelebrated by Fr. Roberto Carelli and Fr. Alejandro Guevara Rodríguez, ADMA’s World Spiritual Animator, during which 23 people professed their commitment to the Association.

Meeting of Salesian Family Delegates of South Asia

The Delegates for the Salesian Family in South Asia Region gathered in the Province of Dimapur, India (IND) from 31st October to 4th November 2023, with the aim of **cultivating unity, elaborating new strategies for growth and sharing the teachings of St. John Bosco, the heart-beat in the organisation of the Salesian Family.**

There were 39 Delegates from various groups of the Salesian Family: Salesians of Don Bosco (SDB), Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA), Salesian Cooperators (SSCC), Association of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA), Association of Past Pupils of Don Bosco (EX. DB), Missionary Sisters of



Family events

Mary Help of Christians (MSMHC), Volunteers of Don Bosco (VDB), Catechist Sisters of Mary Immaculate Help of Christians (SMI), Disciples (DISC), Sisters of the Visitation of Don Bosco (VSDB) and Volunteers with Don Bosco (CDB).

The event also saw the presence of Fr. Joan Luis Playà, SDB, Central Delegate of the Rector Major for the Secretariat for the Salesian Family; Mr.

Domenico Duc Nam SDB, World Delegate for the Past Pupils and Salesian Cooperators; Fr. Alejandro Guevara SDB, World Spiritual Assistant for ADMA; Sr. Leslie Sandigo FMA and Sr. Lucrecia Uribe FMA, World Delegates of the FMA for the SSCC and ADMA respectively; and Fr. Joseph Pauria, Provincial of Kolkata (INC) and Provincial in-charge of the Salesian Family in South Asia Region

International Congress of Mary Help of Christians 2024 at Fatima (Portugal)

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



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

Monthly Prayer Intention

We wish to unite all worldwide Adma groups in prayer for a special intention.

In this month of December, **we pray for peace in the world** with the words of Pope Francis:



O blessed Mother, receive our supplication.

Star of the sea, do not let us be shipwrecked in the storm of war.

Ark of the new covenant, inspire us with ways of reconciliation.

Queen of Heaven, bring God's harmony back into the world.

Help us overcome hatred and vengeance, teach us forgiveness.

Deliver us from war, preserve the world from the nuclear threat.

Queen of the Rosary, reawaken in us the need to pray and to love.

Queen of the human family, show people the way of fraternity.

Queen of peace, obtain peace for the world.

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). *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, and/or in other Adma websites, accompanied by a caption.*