

SALESIAN HOLIDAY - A MARIAN HOLIDAY

Dear friends,

Greetings! We are now fully into the holiday season. It offers many possibilities - a rest from the daily rhythm of our pastoral activity, a chance to spend time with relatives and loved ones, a more relaxed time for formation, or a few days of retreat or Spiritual Exercises, time also to cultivate some hobbies, to walk, to play sports, to prepare a refreshing meal ... or a hot meal (depending on which hemisphere we are in) and to spend time with others.

Wherever we are, the holiday season is also an invitation from the Lord to heal our wounds and soothe them with the balm of hope. We are invited to heed the words of Jesus who says to his disciples: "Come to me, all you that are weary ... and I will give you rest." (cf. Mt 11: 25-26). It is Jesus who invites us to come to him in all our weariness. Our weariness is not only physical, but even more spiritual - lack of energy, psychological fatigue, emotional exhaustion, the desire for relationships, the restlessness of not knowing when a certain situation will end, the uncertain work situation of many families, the precariousness of our health ... and many other factors that little by little undermine our spirit and our deepest reserves.

We have come through a difficult year, marked by the pandemic and its aftermath. It required an extraordinary dose of creativity, flexibility and a level of understanding and patience above what we are used to. With the help of the Lord and of all those around us, we have managed to overcome obstacles and difficulties and we have arrived at this new Salesian holiday.

Don Bosco used to say, "a holiday is a change of occupation." This is how we want to spend the weeks ahead before we start the new year of pastoral activity. A change of occupation allows us to have more time for family, relationships, and friends. We can pray calmly, with serenity, letting our hearts be deeply touched by the Word of God and his daily message. We can celebrate life and be grateful for what we have experienced. We have time to intercede for those who are going through difficult times, time also to ask for forgiveness and to allow ourselves to be reconciled with God and with other people. A change of occupation allows us to purify our gaze, to contemplate life with mercy and to fill our lungs with the fresh breeze of the Gospel. It will put new smiles on our faces that



proclaim a joyful Salesian future for all. The change of occupation also means having time to accompany children and young people of all ages in their various pastoral activities, helping them to benefit from the experiences they need most, experiences that will allow them to grow and get closer to the Lord during this holiday season.

Changing occupation might be one way of responding to Jesus' invitation: "Come to me, all you who are weary ...". And at the same time, we have a teacher who always shows us the way. Turning to Mary at this time of year is the surefire way to relieve our pains and burdens. Mary, the Mother of Consolation, is Jesus' best ally for a wounded humanity that needs to experience the free and unconditional love of the Holy Family of Nazareth. With her protective mantle, Mary is for us a safe refuge, a "field hospital" in

the struggles of ordinary life and, at the same time, a temple of the Holy Spirit for our Salesian holiday time. If we live it in this way, it will be a Marian holiday.

Happy holiday to all!

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FORMATION PROGRAMME 2020-2021

Patris corde. Retreat ADMA Valdocco.

Introduction - *Redemptoris Custos, Virginis Custos*

The loss and the recovery of the "father" is one of the main themes of our time. In Saint Joseph we have an exemplary father figure: of all the saints he was the closest to Jesus and Mary and is the closest to us. St Joseph was invoked by the Popes at difficult times for the Church

First Meditation - *Tender and beloved father*

The faith journey of Saint Joseph, a universally loved father, transformed eros into agape, human love into divine love, his love of husband and father into married love and parental love, merciful like the Father, capable of reaching down to our weaknesses, accepting them and transfiguring them

Second Meditation - *Father in obedience and acceptance*

The foundation of the fatherly authority of St Joseph, and of every father, every parent, and every educator, was unconditional obedience to God. This led him to accept everything from the hands of God, overcoming all fear, because "in God's will is our peace!

Third Meditation - *Father in courage and work*

Saint Joseph is exemplary as a figure of a courageous father because he was full of faith, trusting fully in God's Providence. This courage made him capable of working in a holy way and made him faithful above all in the task of guarding Jesus and Mary in their home.

Fourth Meditation - *Father in the shadows*

In the figure of Joseph we see how the maturity of a father, as of every parent and educator, consists in being at the same time both authoritative and humble, capable of introducing the child to life and capable of stepping aside so as not to imprison him, not owning him or holding him back.

PATRIS CORDE

ON THE 150th ANNIVERSARY
OF THE PROCLAMATION OF SAINT JOSEPH
AS PATRON OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

WITH A FATHER'S HEART: that is how Joseph loved Jesus, whom all four Gospels refer to as "the son of Joseph".

Matthew and Luke, the two Evangelists who speak most of Joseph, tell us very little, yet enough for us to appreciate what sort of father he was, and the mission entrusted to him by God's providence.

We know that Joseph was a lowly carpenter (cf. Mt 13:55), betrothed to Mary

(cf. Mt 1:18; Lk 1:27). He was a “just man” (Mt 1:19), ever ready to carry out God’s will as revealed to him in the Law (cf. Lk 2:22.27.39) and through four dreams (cf. Mt 1:20; 2:13.19.22). After a long and tiring journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, he beheld the birth of the Messiah in a stable, since “there was no place for them” elsewhere (cf. Lk 2:7). He witnessed the adoration of the shepherds (cf. Lk 2:8-20) and the Magi (cf. Mt 2:1-12), who represented respectively the people of Israel and the pagan peoples.

Joseph had the courage to become the legal father of Jesus, to whom he gave the name revealed by the angel: “You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Mt 1:21). As we know, for ancient peoples, to give a name to a person or to a thing, as Adam did in the account in the Book of Genesis (cf. 2:19-20), was to establish a relationship.

In the Temple, forty days after Jesus’ birth, Joseph and Mary offered their child to the Lord and listened with amazement to Simeon’s prophecy concerning Jesus and his Mother (cf. Lk 2:22-35). To protect Jesus from Herod, Joseph dwelt as a foreigner in Egypt (cf. Mt 2:13-18). After returning to his own country, he led a hidden life in the tiny and obscure village of Nazareth in Galilee, far from Bethlehem, his ancestral town, and from Jerusalem and the Temple. Of Nazareth it was said, “No prophet is to rise” (cf. Jn 7:52) and indeed, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (cf. Jn 1:46). When, during a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Joseph and Mary lost track of the twelve-year-old Jesus, they anxiously sought him out and they found him in the Temple, in discussion with the doctors of the Law (cf. Lk 2:41-50).

After Mary, the Mother of God, no saint is mentioned more frequently in the papal magisterium than Joseph, her spouse. My Predecessors reflected on the message contained in the limited information handed down by the Gospels in order to appreciate more fully his central role in the history of salvation. Blessed Pius IX declared him “Patron of the Catholic Church”, Venerable Pius XII proposed him as “Patron of Workers” and Saint John Paul II as “Guardian of the Redeemer”. Saint Joseph is universally invoked as the “patron of a happy death”.

Now, one hundred and fifty years after his proclamation as Patron of the Catholic Church by Blessed Pius IX (8 December 1870), I would like to share some personal reflections on this extraordinary figure, so close to our own human experience. For, as Jesus says, “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Mt 12:34). My desire to do so increased during these months of pandemic, when we experienced, amid the crisis, how “our lives are woven together and sustained by ordinary people, people often overlooked. People who do not appear in newspaper and magazine headlines, or on the latest television show, yet in these very days are surely shaping the decisive events of our history. Doctors, nurses, storekeepers and supermarket workers, cleaning personnel, caregivers, transport workers, men and women working to provide essential services and public safety, volunteers, priests, men and women religious, and so very many others. They understood that no one is saved alone... How many people daily exercise patience and offer hope, taking care to spread not panic, but shared responsibility. How many fathers, mothers, grandparents and teachers are showing our children, in small everyday ways, how to accept and deal with a crisis by adjusting their routines, looking ahead and encouraging the practice of prayer. How many are praying, making sacrifices and interceding for the good of all”. Each of us can discover in Joseph - the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence - an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble. Saint Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation. A word of recognition and of gratitude is due to them all.

1. A beloved father

The greatness of Saint Joseph is that he was the spouse of Mary and the father of Jesus. In this way, he placed himself, in the words of Saint John Chrysostom, “at the service of the entire plan of salvation”.

Saint Paul VI pointed out that Joseph concretely expressed his fatherhood “by making his life a sacrificial service to the mystery of the incarnation and its redemptive purpose. He employed his legal authority over the Holy Family to devote himself completely to them in his life and work. He turned his human vocation to domestic love into a superhuman oblation of himself, his heart and all his abilities, a love placed at the service of the Messiah who was growing to maturity in his home”.

Thanks to his role in salvation history, Saint Joseph has always been venerated as a father by the Christian people. This is shown by the countless churches dedicated to him worldwide, the numerous religious Institutes, Confraternities and ecclesial groups inspired by his spirituality and bearing his name, and the many traditional expressions of piety in his honour. Innumerable holy men and women were passionately devoted to him. Among them was Teresa of Avila, who chose him as her advocate and intercessor, had frequent recourse to him and received whatever graces she asked of him. Encouraged by her own experience, Teresa persuaded others to cultivate devotion to Joseph.

Every prayer book contains prayers to Saint Joseph. Special prayers are offered to him each Wednesday and especially during the month of March, which is traditionally dedicated to him.

Popular trust in Saint Joseph is seen in the expression “Go to Joseph”, which evokes the famine in Egypt, when the Egyptians begged Pharaoh for bread. He in turn replied: “Go to Joseph; what he says to you, do” (Gen 41:55). Pharaoh was referring to Joseph the son of Jacob, who was sold into slavery because of the jealousy of his brothers (cf. Gen 37:11-28) and who – according to the biblical account – subsequently became viceroy of Egypt (cf. Gen 41:41-44).

As a descendant of David (cf. Mt 1:16-20), from whose stock Jesus was to spring according to the promise made to David by the prophet Nathan (cf. 2 Sam 7), and as the spouse of Mary of Nazareth, Saint Joseph stands at the crossroads between the Old and New Testaments.

2. A tender and loving father

Joseph saw Jesus grow daily “in wisdom and in years and in divine and human favour” (Lk 2:52). As the Lord had done with Israel, so Joseph did with Jesus: he taught him to walk, taking him by the hand; he was for him like a father who raises an infant to his cheeks, bending down to him and feeding him (cf. Hos 11:3-4).

In Joseph, Jesus saw the tender love of God: “As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him” (Ps 103:13).

In the synagogue, during the praying of the Psalms, Joseph would surely have heard again and again that the God of Israel is a God of tender love, who is good to all, whose “compassion is over all that he has made” (Ps 145:9).

The history of salvation is worked out “in hope against hope” (Rom 4:18), through our weaknesses. All too often, we think that God works only through our better parts, yet most of his plans are realized in and despite our frailty. Thus Saint Paul could say: “To keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me: ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness’” (2 Cor 12:7-9).

Since this is part of the entire economy of salvation, we must learn to look upon our weaknesses with tender mercy.

The evil one makes us see and condemn our frailty, whereas the Spirit brings it to light with tender love. Tenderness is the best way to touch the frailty within us. Pointing fingers and judging others are frequently signs of an inability to accept our own weaknesses, our own frailty. Only tender love will save us from the snares of the accuser (cf. Rev 12:10). That is why it is so important to encounter God’s mercy, especially in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, where we experience his truth and tenderness. Paradoxically, the evil one can also speak the truth to us, yet he does so only to condemn us. We know that God’s truth does not condemn, but instead welcomes, embraces, sustains and forgives us. That truth always presents itself to us like the merciful father in Jesus’ parable (cf. Lk 15:11-32). It comes out to meet us, restores our dignity, sets us back on our feet and rejoices for us, for, as the father says: “This my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found” (v. 24).

Even through Joseph’s fears, God’s will, his history and his plan were at work. Joseph, then, teaches us that faith in God includes believing that he can work even through our fears, our frailties and our weaknesses. He also teaches us that amid the tempests of life, we must never be afraid to let the Lord steer our course. At times, we want to be in complete control, yet God always sees the bigger picture.

3. An obedient father

As he had done with Mary, God revealed his saving plan to Joseph. He did so by using dreams, which in the Bible and among all ancient peoples, were considered a way for him to make his will known.

Joseph was deeply troubled by Mary’s mysterious pregnancy. He did not want to “expose her to public disgrace”, so he decided to “dismiss her quietly” (Mt 1:19).

In the first dream, an angel helps him resolve his grave dilemma: “Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Mt 1:20-21). Joseph’s response was immediate: “When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him” (Mt 1:24). Obedience made it possible for him to surmount his difficulties and spare Mary.

In the second dream, the angel tells Joseph: “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him” (Mt 2:13). Joseph did not hesitate to obey, regardless of the hardship involved: “He got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of

Herod" (Mt 2:14-15).

In Egypt, Joseph awaited with patient trust the angel's notice that he could safely return home. In a third dream, the angel told him that those who sought to kill the child were dead and ordered him to rise, take the child and his mother, and return to the land of Israel (cf. Mt 2:19-20). Once again, Joseph promptly obeyed. "He got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel" (Mt 2:21).

During the return journey, "when Joseph heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. After being warned in a dream" - now for the fourth time - "he went away to the district of Galilee. There he made his home in a town called Nazareth" (Mt 2:22-23).

The evangelist Luke, for his part, tells us that Joseph undertook the long and difficult journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be registered in his family's town of origin in the census of the Emperor Caesar Augustus. There Jesus was born (cf. Lk 2:7) and his birth, like that of every other child, was recorded in the registry of the Empire. Saint Luke is especially concerned to tell us that Jesus' parents observed all the prescriptions of the Law: the rites of the circumcision of Jesus, the purification of Mary after childbirth, the offering of the firstborn to God (cf. 2:21-24).

In every situation, Joseph declared his own "fiat", like those of Mary at the Annunciation and Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

In his role as the head of a family, Joseph taught Jesus to be obedient to his parents (cf. Lk 2:51), in accordance with God's command (cf. Ex 20:12).

During the hidden years in Nazareth, Jesus learned at the school of Joseph to do the will of the Father. That will was to be his daily food (cf. Jn 4:34). Even at the most difficult moment of his life, in Gethsemane, Jesus chose to do the Father's will rather than his own, becoming "obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8). The author of the Letter to the Hebrews thus concludes that Jesus "learned obedience through what he suffered" (5:8).

All this makes it clear that "Saint Joseph was called by God to serve the person and mission of Jesus directly through the exercise of his fatherhood" and that in this way, "he cooperated in the fullness of time in the great mystery of salvation and is truly a minister of salvation."

4. An accepting father

Joseph accepted Mary unconditionally. He trusted in the angel's words. "The nobility of Joseph's heart is such that what he learned from the law he made dependent on charity. Today, in our world where psychological, verbal and physical violence towards women is so evident, Joseph appears as the figure of a respectful and sensitive man. Even though he does not understand the bigger picture, he makes a decision to protect Mary's good name, her dignity and her life. In his hesitation about how best to act, God helped him by enlightening his judgment".

Often in life, things happen whose meaning we do not understand. Our first reaction is frequently one of disappointment and rebellion. Joseph set aside his own ideas in order to accept the course of events and, mysterious as they seemed, to embrace them, take responsibility for them and

make them part of his own history. Unless we are reconciled with our own history, we will be unable to take a single step forward, for we will always remain hostage to our expectations and the disappointments that follow.

The spiritual path that Joseph traces for us is not one that explains, but accepts. Only as a result of this acceptance, this reconciliation, can we begin to glimpse a broader history, a deeper meaning. We can almost hear an echo of the impassioned reply of Job to his wife, who had urged him to rebel against the evil he endured: "Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?" (Job 2:10).

Joseph is certainly not passively resigned, but courageously and firmly proactive. In our own lives, acceptance and welcome can be an expression of the Holy Spirit's gift of fortitude. Only the Lord can give us the strength needed to accept life as it is, with all its contradictions, frustrations and disappointments.

Jesus' appearance in our midst is a gift from the Father, which makes it possible for each of us to be reconciled to the flesh of our own history, even when we fail to understand it completely.

Just as God told Joseph: "Son of David, do not be afraid!" (Mt 1:20), so he seems to tell us: "Do not be afraid!" We need to set aside all anger and disappointment, and to embrace the way things are, even when they do not turn out as we wish. Not with mere resignation but with hope and courage. In this way, we become open to a deeper meaning. Our lives can be miraculously reborn if we find the courage to live them in accordance with the Gospel. It does not matter if everything seems to have gone wrong or some things can no longer be fixed. God can make flowers spring up from stony ground. Even if our heart condemns us, "God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything" (1 Jn 3:20).

Here, once again, we encounter that Christian realism which rejects nothing that exists. Reality, in its mysterious and irreducible complexity, is the bearer of existential meaning, with all its lights and shadows. Thus, the Apostle Paul can say: "We know that all things work together for good, for those who love God" (Rom 8:28). To which Saint Augustine adds, "even that which is called evil (*etiam illud quod malum dicitur*)". In this greater perspective, faith gives meaning to every event, however happy or sad.

Nor should we ever think that believing means finding facile and comforting solutions. The faith Christ taught us is what we see in Saint Joseph. He did not look for shortcuts, but confronted reality with open eyes and accepted personal responsibility for it.

Joseph's attitude encourages us to accept and welcome others as they are, without exception, and to show special concern for the weak, for God chooses what is weak (cf. 1 Cor 1:27). He is the "Father of orphans and protector of widows" (Ps 68:6), who commands us to love the stranger in our midst. I like to think that it was from Saint Joseph that Jesus drew inspiration for the parable of the prodigal son and the merciful father (cf. Lk 15:11-32).

5. A creatively courageous father

If the first stage of all true interior healing is to accept our personal history and embrace even the things in life that we did not choose, we must now add another important element: creative cour-

age. This emerges especially in the way we deal with difficulties. In the face of difficulty, we can either give up and walk away, or somehow engage with it. At times, difficulties bring out resources we did not even think we had.

As we read the infancy narratives, we may often wonder why God did not act in a more direct and clear way. Yet God acts through events and people. Joseph was the man chosen by God to guide the beginnings of the history of redemption. He was the true “miracle” by which God saves the child and his mother. God acted by trusting in Joseph’s creative courage. Arriving in Bethlehem and finding no lodging where Mary could give birth, Joseph took a stable and, as best he could, turned it into a welcoming home for the Son of God come into the world (cf. Lk 2:6-7). Faced with imminent danger from Herod, who wanted to kill the child, Joseph was warned once again in a dream to protect the child, and rose in the middle of the night to prepare the flight into Egypt (cf. Mt 2:13-14).

A superficial reading of these stories can often give the impression that the world is at the mercy of the strong and mighty, but the “good news” of the Gospel consists in showing that, for all the arrogance and violence of worldly powers, God always finds a way to carry out his saving plan. So too, our lives may at times seem to be at the mercy of the powerful, but the Gospel shows us what counts. God always finds a way to save us, provided we show the same creative courage as the carpenter of Nazareth, who was able to turn a problem into a possibility by trusting always in divine providence.

If at times God seems not to help us, surely this does not mean that we have been abandoned, but instead are being trusted to plan, to be creative, and to find solutions ourselves.

That kind of creative courage was shown by the friends of the paralytic, who lowered him from the roof in order to bring him to Jesus (cf. Lk 5:17-26). Difficulties did not stand in the way of those friends’ boldness and persistence. They were convinced that Jesus could heal the man, and “finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the middle of the crowd in front of Jesus. When he saw their faith, he said, ‘Friend, your sins are forgiven you’” (vv. 19-20). Jesus recognized the creative faith with which they sought to bring their sick friend to him.

The Gospel does not tell us how long Mary, Joseph and the child remained in Egypt. Yet they certainly needed to eat, to find a home and employment. It does not take much imagination to fill in those details. The Holy Family had to face concrete problems like every other family, like so many of our migrant brothers and sisters who, today too, risk their lives to escape misfortune and hunger. In this regard, I consider Saint Joseph the special patron of all those forced to leave their native lands because of war, hatred, persecution and poverty.

At the end of every account in which Joseph plays a role, the Gospel tells us that he gets up, takes the child and his mother, and does what God commanded him (cf. Mt 1:24; 2:14.21). Indeed, Jesus and Mary his Mother are the most precious treasure of our faith.

In the divine plan of salvation, the Son is inseparable from his Mother, from Mary, who “advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son until she stood at the cross”.

We should always consider whether we ourselves are protecting Jesus and Mary, for they are also mysteriously entrusted to our own responsibility, care and safekeeping. The Son of the Almighty came into our world in a state of great vulnerability. He needed to be defended, protected, cared for and raised by Joseph. God trusted Joseph, as did Mary, who found in him someone who would not only save her life, but would always provide for her and her child. In this sense, Saint Joseph could not be other than the Guardian of the Church, for the Church is the continuation of the Body of Christ in history, even as Mary's motherhood is reflected in the motherhood of the Church. In his continued protection of the Church, Joseph continues to protect the child and his mother, and we too, by our love for the Church, continue to love the child and his mother.

That child would go on to say: "As you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). Consequently, every poor, needy, suffering or dying person, every stranger, every prisoner, every infirm person is "the child" whom Joseph continues to protect. For this reason, Saint Joseph is invoked as protector of the unfortunate, the needy, exiles, the afflicted, the poor and the dying. Consequently, the Church cannot fail to show a special love for the least of our brothers and sisters, for Jesus showed a particular concern for them and personally identified with them. From Saint Joseph, we must learn that same care and responsibility. We must learn to love the child and his mother, to love the sacraments and charity, to love the Church and the poor. Each of these realities is always the child and his mother.

6. A working father

An aspect of Saint Joseph that has been emphasized from the time of the first social Encyclical, Pope Leo XIII's Rerum Novarum, is his relation to work. Saint Joseph was a carpenter who earned an honest living to provide for his family. From him, Jesus learned the value, the dignity and the joy of what it means to eat bread that is the fruit of one's own labour.

In our own day, when employment has once more become a burning social issue, and unemployment at times reaches record levels even in nations that for decades have enjoyed a certain degree of prosperity, there is a renewed need to appreciate the importance of dignified work, of which Saint Joseph is an exemplary patron.

Work is a means of participating in the work of salvation, an opportunity to hasten the coming of the Kingdom, to develop our talents and abilities, and to put them at the service of society and fraternal communion. It becomes an opportunity for the fulfilment not only of oneself, but also of that primary cell of society which is the family. A family without work is particularly vulnerable to difficulties, tensions, estrangement and even break-up. How can we speak of human dignity without working to ensure that everyone is able to earn a decent living?

Working persons, whatever their job may be, are cooperating with God himself, and in some way become creators of the world around us. The crisis of our time, which is economic, social, cultural and spiritual, can serve as a summons for all of us to rediscover the value, the importance and necessity of work for bringing about a new "normal" from which no one is excluded. Saint Joseph's work reminds us that God himself, in becoming man, did not disdain work. The loss of employment that affects so many of our brothers and sisters, and has increased as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, should serve as a summons to review our priorities. Let us implore Saint Joseph the Worker to help us find ways to express our firm conviction that no young person, no person at all, no family should be without work!

7. A father in the shadows

The Polish writer Jan Dobraczyński, in his book *The Shadow of the Father*, tells the story of Saint Joseph's life in the form of a novel. He uses the evocative image of a shadow to define Joseph. In his relationship to Jesus, Joseph was the earthly shadow of the heavenly Father: he watched over him and protected him, never leaving him to go his own way. We can think of Moses' words to Israel: "In the wilderness... you saw how the Lord your God carried you, just as one carries a child, all the way that you travelled" (Deut 1:31). In a similar way, Joseph acted as a father for his whole life.

Fathers are not born, but made. A man does not become a father simply by bringing a child into the world, but by taking up the responsibility to care for that child. Whenever a man accepts responsibility for the life of another, in some way he becomes a father to that person.

Children today often seem orphans, lacking fathers. The Church too needs fathers. Saint Paul's words to the Corinthians remain timely: "Though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers" (1 Cor 4:15). Every priest or bishop should be able to add, with the Apostle: "I became your father in Christ Jesus through the Gospel" (ibid.). Paul likewise calls the Galatians: "My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you!" (4:19).

Being a father entails introducing children to life and reality. Not holding them back, being over-protective or possessive, but rather making them capable of deciding for themselves, enjoying freedom and exploring new possibilities. Perhaps for this reason, Joseph is traditionally called a "most chaste" father. That title is not simply a sign of affection, but the summation of an attitude that is the opposite of possessiveness. Chastity is freedom from possessiveness in every sphere of one's life. Only when love is chaste, is it truly love. A possessive love ultimately becomes dangerous: it imprisons, constricts and makes for misery. God himself loved humanity with a chaste love; he left us free even to go astray and set ourselves against him. The logic of love is always the logic of freedom, and Joseph knew how to love with extraordinary freedom. He never made himself the centre of things. He did not think of himself, but focused instead on the lives of Mary and Jesus.

Joseph found happiness not in mere self-sacrifice but in self-gift. In him, we never see frustration but only trust. His patient silence was the prelude to concrete expressions of trust. Our world today needs fathers. It has no use for tyrants who would domineer others as a means of compensating for their own needs. It rejects those who confuse authority with authoritarianism, service with servility, discussion with oppression, charity with a welfare mentality, power with destruction. Every true vocation is born of the gift of oneself, which is the fruit of mature sacrifice. The priesthood and consecrated life likewise require this kind of maturity. Whatever our vocation, whether to marriage, celibacy or virginity, our gift of self will not come to fulfilment if it stops at sacrifice; were that the case, instead of becoming a sign of the beauty and joy of love, the gift of self would risk being an expression of unhappiness, sadness and frustration.

When fathers refuse to live the lives of their children for them, new and unexpected vistas open up. Every child is the bearer of a unique mystery that can only be brought to light with the help of a father who respects that child's freedom. A father who realizes that he is most a father and educator at the point when he becomes "useless", when he sees that his child has become independent and can walk the paths of life unaccompanied. When he becomes like Joseph, who always

knew that his child was not his own but had merely been entrusted to his care. In the end, this is what Jesus would have us understand when he says: "Call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven" (Mt 23:9).

In every exercise of our fatherhood, we should always keep in mind that it has nothing to do with possession, but is rather a "sign" pointing to a greater fatherhood. In a way, we are all like Joseph: a shadow of the heavenly Father, who "makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Mt 5:45). And a shadow that follows his Son.

"Get up, take the child and his mother" (Mt 2:13), God told Saint Joseph.

The aim of this Apostolic Letter is to increase our love for this great saint, to encourage us to implore his intercession and to imitate his virtues and his zeal.

Indeed, the proper mission of the saints is not only to obtain miracles and graces, but to intercede for us before God, like Abraham and Moses and like Jesus, the "one mediator" (1 Tim 2:5), who is our "advocate" with the Father (1 Jn 2:1) and who "always lives to make intercession for [us]" (Heb 7:25; cf. Rom 8:34).

The saints help all the faithful "to strive for the holiness and the perfection of their particular state of life". Their lives are concrete proof that it is possible to put the Gospel into practice.

Jesus told us: "Learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart" (Mt 11:29). The lives of the saints too are examples to be imitated. Saint Paul explicitly says this: "Be imitators of me!" (1 Cor 4:16). By his eloquent silence, Saint Joseph says the same.

Before the example of so many holy men and women, Saint Augustine asked himself: "What they could do, can you not also do?" And so he drew closer to his definitive conversion, when he could exclaim: "Late have I loved you, Beauty ever ancient, ever new!"

We need only ask Saint Joseph for the grace of graces: our conversion.

Let us now make our prayer to him:

Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
To you God entrusted his only Son;
in you Mary placed her trust;
with you Christ became man.
Blessed Joseph, to us too,
show yourself a father
and guide us in the path of life.

Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage,
and defend us from every evil. Amen

AO – ADMA CONGRESS 2021

'WALKING TO JESUS LIKE MARY'

The long-awaited dream of the second ADMA Congress in the EAO Region is approaching (September 11-12). The first general preparatory meeting was held last Sunday 18 July with 30 members of the broader steering committee taking part. The Association of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA) is already present in large numbers in only three EAO provinces (FIS-FIN: Philippines and TLS: Timor Leste) with almost 80 local groups. Another 11 local ADMA groups have just started: 1 in Hong Kong (CIN), 2 in Seoul-Gwangju (KOR), 1 in Bangkok (THA), 2 at Trai Gao and HCM City (VIE), 2 at Sumba- Jakarta (INA), 2 at Port Moresby-PNG (PGS), and 1 in Tokyo (GIA).

In the first preparatory meeting there were 8 Spiritual Animators (SDB-FMA), 2 SDB provincial delegates for the Salesian Family, one SDB translator, an IT expert (GEX-former student) and 12 ADMA members (including an Aspirant) from 8 EAO Provinces. The presence of Sr. Aurea, FMA (Indonesia, Sumba-Palla centre of ADMA) and Fr Guy Riolo, SDB (Australia, community of Glenorchy in Tasmania) was particularly appreciated. Sumba belongs to the EAO internet-frontiers and Tasmania will one day be the first ADMA group in the whole of the Australia-Pacific province.

Like every ADMA congress, the 2nd EAO regional congress is open also to all members of the Salesian Family. Do not miss this opportunity to revive your relationship with Mary, as the first disciple and missionary of Jesus.

Theme: "Like Mary, let's walk with Jesus".

Time: 11-12 September 2021 (2 hours every day, starting at 8.00 a.m. Italian time). Place: Zoom digital platform with translation into EAO languages (LIVE streaming). Objectives: 1. To strengthen and understand the identity of ADMA members. 2. To assist new or recently started AD-



MA centres, especially younger members. 3. To grow in synergy with the world association of AD-

MA (800+ local centres). 4. To inspire each other with personal and community experience of ADMA. During the two days of the EAO ADMA Congress, about 20 videos made by members of each country will be shared: welcome dance, prayers, good night, sharing the life of ADMA, animated rosary. Two key interventions with subsequent questions and answers will be given by Fr. Alejandro Guevara, SDB (World Spiritual Animator) and Renato Valera (leader of the ADMA Turin-Valdocco group). At the end of each two-hour programme, registered members are invited to join small language groups for sharing.

There are many expectations from this EAO ADMA Congress, as pointed out by Fr. Joseph Phuoc (EAO SDB Regional Councilor) in this final comment: "We would especially like to accompany the start-up ADMA groups in the region and we also expect growth of a deeper charismatic identity among ADMA members. Like any international event, this EAO Congress is not important as a celebration, but in the preparatory phase - we try to involve more new members and other groups of the Salesian Family."

Registration for the Congress is open until 31 July 2021: <https://forms.gle/HWyrAESmXs6VTuXy8>
ADMA Congress East Asia Oceania 2021 (resources)

https://www.bosco.link/side_right/71043

Public Group ADMA East Asia Oceania (Facebook)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/365000998300127>



REGULATIONS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS TO STUDY OUR IDENTITY AND PUT IT INTO PRATICE

ARTICLE 4 - Personal commitment of the members (FIRST PART)

Personal membership of the Association is a concrete expression of the response to the call to live one's daily life according to the spirit of a Eucharistic, Marian and apostolic group.

In this way we become living signs of the presence of Mary Help of Christians in the active life of every day: in family and work environments, in the network of social relationships and among friends.

Marian devotion, in the form proposed by Don Bosco, leads to the enhancement of the maternal face of the Church by living the Eucharist as the summit and source of Christian life.

It is necessary to dedicate space and time to recollection and prayer, the true nourishment of pastoral activities that would risk being sterile if they are not preceded, accompanied and supported by incessant prayer.

The Eucharistic Celebration must be rediscovered starting from the encounter with the Risen One in the Word and in the broken Bread. Attention must be paid at Mass and Adoration to enhance the beauty and depth of the mystery of Christ

Similarly, the Sacrament of Reconciliation should be celebrated as a fundamental means for spiritual growth and to find new courage in facing the challenges of life.

True devotion of Christians to Mary Help of Christians is strengthened by actions and by proclamation.

Let this be our wish for the holiday period: to spread love and trust in Mary with simplicity and strength.

Andrea and Maria Adele Damiani

FAMILY CHRONICLE

ADMA HONDURAS

As part of the celebration of the solemnity of Mary Help of Christians, we in the Association of Devotees of Mary Help of Christians ADMA, San Miguel de Tegucigalpa, M.D.C. Honduras, C.A. are deeply grateful to God in the first place and to Fr Alejandro Guevara SDB, for giving us this precious opportunity to share the 15th anniversary of our foundation with all our ADMA brothers and sisters in the world.

ADMA began in Honduras through the initiative of Fr. Atilio Vásquez SDB who was led by the Holy Spirit to call a group of people to begin the Association. With faith in God and the maternal gaze of Mary Help of Christians, nineteen chosen members made the promise and pledged to promote devotion to Mary Help of Christians and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

When Fr Atilio had to leave our country at the end of 2005, Miguel Angel Zamora SDB continued the formation of ADMA. And so it was that on 24 May 2006, eighteen women and one man arrived full of joy and happiness at the altar to say HERE I AM, to continue the apostolate that Mary Help of Christians asks of us.

We give infinite and eternal thanks to Don Bosco our Father, Teacher and Guide who founded our beloved Association on 18 April 1869. We are grateful to God, to Mary Help of Christians and to Don Bosco, for the excellent Spiritual Counselors we have had on our journey in these past fifteen years - Fr Francesco Atilio Vásquez SDB, Fr Miguel Ángel Zamora SDB, Fr Walter Guillen SDB (now Monsignor) and this year 2021 Fr. Mauricio Dada SDB, as well as the world spiritual animators Fr Pierluigi Cameroni SDB and currently Fr. Alejandro Guevara SDB.

During these fifteen years since our foundation, God has been good to us. He has blessed us by allowing us to participate in Central American and World Congresses. We have hosted the Fourth Central American Congress and we had the presence at that moment of our World Spiritual Animator Fr Pierluigi Cameroni SDB. It is important to say that we also have ADMA YOUTH and ADMA for children. Finally, we wish to thank once again for the opportunity given to us to make our ADMA association in Tegucigalpa, Honduras known, and we ask for prayers for our members who already enjoy the presence of God in the Paradise promised by Don Bosco - Gabriel Talavera, Nelly de Pineda, Nelly Maradiaga, Mayra Custodio and Beatriz Zelaya.

MARY, HELP OF CHRISTIANS. Pray for us

