



## EDITORIAL

# "PRAYER OBTAINS MORE FROM GOD THAN IT ASKS FOR"

Dear friends,

Here we are living this special time of Lent. A time that calls us to essentiality, invites us to make that exercise and that constant effort to direct our whole life towards the one treasure and the one hope and to prepare our hearts for the resurrection of Jesus.

Today even more so, faced with the news of an unjust war, the images of suffering faces and bodies and the suffocated cries of children, we must continue to live, to do daily activities, even in bitterness and bewilderment. We can find meaning only by asking ourselves: what is essential in my life?

Each of us find an answer in our personal encounter with Christ, and in this favourable time three pearls that can accompany and help us on our journey of inner search: prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Faced with war, we experience an immobility that disconcerts us. But let us not forget that prayer is a very powerful weapon with which we can ask for anything. As St. Francis de Sales reminds us, "Prayer obtains more from God than it asks for". So, let us not hesitate to ask and dare to 'ask', knowing that prayer comes before any action. It enlightens, directs and solves.

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"Fasting as an experience of self-denial leads us to rediscover the gift of God and to understand our reality as creatures in His image and likeness, who find fulfilment in him. Understood and practised in this way, fasting helps us to love God and neighbor because, as Saint Thomas Aquinas sought to describe the love made possible by God's grace as a movement outwards towards another, whereby we consider the beloved as somehow united to ourselves (cf. Encyclical Fratelli Tutti, 93). Let us live fasting as the denial not only of food, but of everything that is redundant in our lives. Let us take up Pope Francis' invitation to fast from everything that does not allow us to live a true and personal relationship with our neighbour".



"Let us do good without being discouraged; in due time we shall reap the reward for our constancy. So, while there is time, let us do good to all" (Gal 6:9-10a). This is the exhortation of Pope Francis gives us for this Lent. Let us ask the Lord who accompanies us on this journey returning to essentiality, to make us seize every opportunity, occasion, moment, possibility to become one with Him. Lent is a favourable time to seek out, and not to avoid, those in need; to reach out, and not to ignore, those who wish to be heard and to have a good word; to visit, and not to abandon, those who suffer from loneliness. Let us put into practice the call to do good to all, taking time to love the least and most defenseless, the abandoned and the despised, those who are discriminated against and the marginalised (Message of Pope Francis for Lent 2022).

Mary "ponders all these things in her heart" and thus becomes a teacher of prayer, discernment and action. Let us ask her to

guide us in all our efforts, for consolation when we feel depressed, for strength to pray and fast and to inspire us with the "great hope" of eternal life.

Renato Valera, President ADMA Valdocco.

Alejandro Guevara, Spiritual Animator, ADMA Valdocco..

## FORMATION SECTION

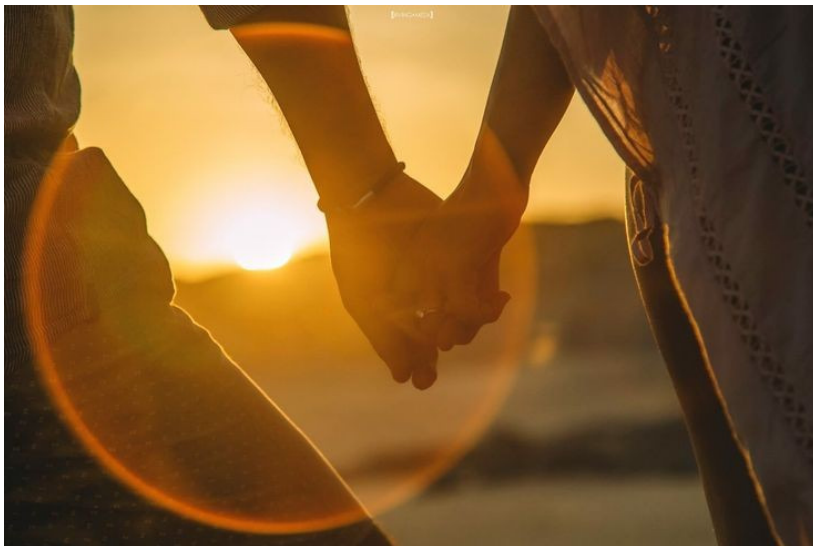
# WHEN THE ROAD TO LOVE IN THE FAMILY IS STEEP

Chapter 6 of Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love) is entitled "Some pastoral perspectives": a title that does not immediately tell us what we are going to find inside, although we can guess

that it will have to do with the daily life of the 'flock'. The biblical references to this adjective make us think as much of green pastures as of the dark valley, of the safe ninety-nine while the shepherd goes in search of the one that has gone astray, to the point of carrying it on his shoulders with great joy. Thinking of the sheep also makes one think of wolves, of mercenaries, of the good shepherd who gives life. A pastoral mix of peace and tribulation comes to mind. These are not misplaced emotions and images, albeit contrasting, as an introduction to what Pope Francis presents in this chapter, with numerous references to the synodal journey of which the letter was the crowning glory.

It begins with a striking reference to joy, just as enlightening is the culminating point of the Good Shepherd psalm: "Goodness and kindness will follow me all the days of my life" (Ps 22:6).

*200. The Synod Fathers emphasized that Christian families, by the grace of the sacrament of matrimony, are the principal agents of the family apostolate, above all through "their joy-filled witness as domestic churches". Consequently, "it is important that people experience the Gospel of the family as a joy that 'fills hearts and lives', because in Christ we have been "set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness" (Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel), 1). Subito dopo si parla di un "amore forte, solido, duraturo, capace di far fronte a tutto ciò che si presenti sulla loro strada". Il capitolo con franchezza presenta molte facce di "tutto ciò" che di difficile e sfidante le famiglie oggi si trovano ad affrontare.*



Immediately afterwards it speaks of a "strong, solid, lasting love, capable of facing anything that comes their way". The chapter clearly presents many aspects of 'everything' that is difficult and challenging for families today.

This coexistence of joy and the cross is closely related to the pilgrimage from Bethlehem to Golgotha in the Gospel, and to the page that sublimely condenses this good news: the Beatitudes. There we see that

the greatest joy, repeated eight times: "Blessed, blessed, blessed...", and being persecuted, are not one or the other, but only and always one in the other, just as the cross and resurrection are.

Don Bosco, above all with the witness of his life, is on this same wavelength: "Walk with your feet on the ground and with your heart fixed on heaven".

Chapter VI of *Amoris Laetitia* keeps us with our feet on the ground, and leads us straight to the concreteness of the daily life of families, where there are many challenges, linked to personal experiences and to the strong impact of the contexts in which families live, as clearly emerged during the synodal process.

*201. The Synod Fathers also "highlighted the fact that evangelization needs unambiguously to denounce cultural, social, political and economic factors – such as*



*the excessive importance given to market logic – that prevent authentic family life and lead to discrimination, poverty, exclusion, and violence. Consequently, dialogue and cooperation need to be fostered with societal structures and encouragement given to lay people who are involved, as Christians, in the cultural and socio-political fields". (Relatio Synodi - Synodal Document - 2014, 38)*

The path proposed to us by Pope Francis as a whole is not limited to listing the difficulties, denouncing them and urging changes from outside. It remains firmly in tune with the Gospel, where the most important processes concern first and foremost the heart of each person.

**. A persistently critical attitude towards one's partner is a sign that marriage was not entered into as a project to be worked on together, with patience, understanding, tolerance and generosity.**

The first step is to take a realistic and at the same time serene look at the limitation that each of us carry with us and that does not disappear on the wedding day. Incompletion is not an exception: it is part of the journey, always and for everyone.

*218. Another great challenge of marriage preparation is to help couples realize that marriage is not something that happens once for all. Their union is real and irrevocable, confirmed and consecrated by the sacrament of matrimony. Yet in joining their lives, the spouses assume an active and creative role in a lifelong project. Their gaze now has to be directed to the future that, with the help of God's grace, they are daily called to build. For this very reason, neither spouse*

*can expect the other to be perfect. Each must set aside all illusions and accept the other as he or she actually is: an unfinished product, needing to grow, a work in progress. A persistently critical attitude towards one's partner is a sign that marriage was not entered into as a project to be worked on together, with patience, understanding, tolerance and generosity. Slowly but surely, love will then give way to constant questioning and criticism, dwelling on each other's good and bad points, issuing ultimatums and engaging in competition and self-justification. The couple then prove incapable of helping one another to build a mature union. This fact needs to be realistically presented to newly married couples at the outset, so that they can grasp that the wedding is 'just the beginning'. By saying "I do", they embark on a journey that requires them to overcome all obstacles standing in the way of their reaching the goal. The nuptial blessing that they receive is a grace and an incentive for this journey.*

The pedagogy of the accepted limit, which becomes an opportunity to go further on the path, makes one grow when it is more a matter of a mutual acceptance and a journey made together, spouses among themselves, children and parents, brothers and sisters.

It is a tone that we find very much present in the framework of the first Oratory of Don Bosco who always believed in the potential for good that can be found in everyone, even where limits can be very conspicuous.

**"...In every young person, even the most unfortunate, there is a moment that is accessible to his goodness and the first duty of the educator is to seek out this moment, this sensitive cord of the heart, in order to profit from it". (MB V, 367)**

*"Just as there is no useless and sterile soil that through long patience cannot finally bear fruit, so it is with man; true moral soil which, however sterile it may be and however long it remains, produces sooner or later honest thoughts and then virtuous acts. In every young person, even the most unfortunate, there is a moment that is accessible to his goodness and the first duty of the educator is to seek out this moment, this sensitive cord of the heart, in order to profit from it". (MB V, 367).*

Pope Francis often uses the image of the craftsman: with patience and dedication something beautiful, new, useful can be born, even without having the genius of an

artist but treasuring what is learned from experience. Making mistakes is always part of the process.

Transforming limitations into paths to maturity is an art of family love that everyone can learn to practise.

221. *One of the causes of broken marriages is unduly high expectations about conjugal life. Once it becomes apparent that the reality is more limited and challenging than one imagined, the solution is not to think quickly and irresponsibly about separation, but to come to the sober realization that married life is a process of growth, in which each spouse is God's means of helping the other to mature. Change, improvement, the flowering of the good qualities present in each person – all these are possible. Each marriage is a kind of "salvation history", which from fragile beginnings – thanks to God's gift and a creative and generous response on our part – grows over time into something precious and enduring. Shall we say that the greatest mission of two people in love is to help one another become, respectively, more a man and more a woman? Fostering growth means helping a person to shape his or her own identity. Love is thus a kind of craftsmanship. When we read in the Bible about the creation of man and woman, we*



*see God first forming Adam (cf. Gen 2:7); he realizes that something essential is lacking and so he forms Eve and then hears the man exclaim in amazement, "Yes, this one is just right for me!" We can almost hear the amazing dialogue that must have taken place when the man and the woman first encountered one another. In the life of married couples, even at difficult moments, one person can always surprise the other, and new doors can open for their relationship, as if they were meeting for the first time. At every new stage, they can keep 'forming' one another. Love makes each wait for the other with the patience of a craftsman, a patience which comes from God.*

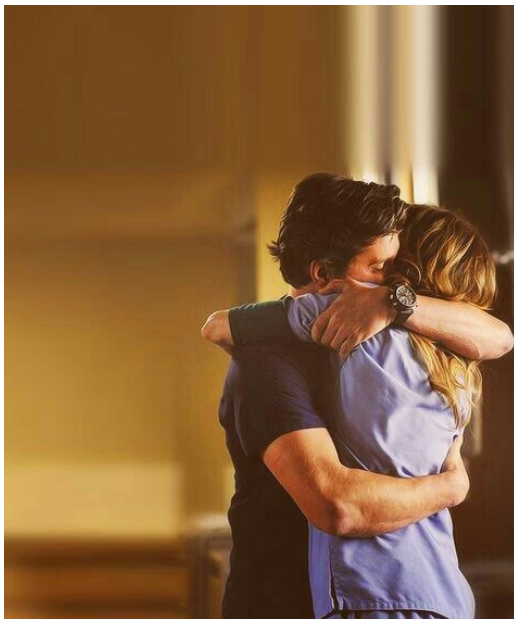
Don Bosco's Preventive System is a charismatic inheritance to which we are all very attached in our family: it is like the photograph with which we perceive the atmosphere of the first oratory in Valdocco, with Mamma Margaret, Don Bosco and the boys of those early years. When Don Bosco talks about this, his emphasis is on PREVENTION, in the sense of foreseeing, perceiving in time what is good and making things happen: if you sow the good wheat with care and creativity, the space for the weeds is reduced.

This holy preventive wisdom is part of the pedagogy that Pope Francis encourages us to adopt so that the inevitable and necessary moments of crisis find us prepared and capable of transforming them into opportunities, rather than being swept away by them.

224. *This process takes time. Love needs time and space; everything else is secondary. Time is needed to talk things over, to embrace leisurely, to share plans, to listen to one another and gaze in each other's eyes, to appreciate one another and to build a stronger relationship. Sometimes the frenetic pace of our society and the pressures of the workplace create problems. At other times, the problem is the lack of quality time together, sharing the same room without one even noticing the other.*

225. *Couples who have learned how to do this well can share some practical suggestions which they have found useful: planning free time together, moments of recreation with the children, different ways of celebrating important events, shared opportunities for spiritual growth. They can also provide resources that help young married couples to make those moments meaningful and loving, and thus to improve their communication. This is extremely important for the stage when the novelty of marriage has worn off. Once a couple no longer knows how to spend time together, one or both of them will end up taking refuge in gadgets, finding other commitments, seeking the embrace of another, or simply looking for ways to flee what has become an uncomfortable closeness.*

Once a couple no longer knows how to spend time together, one or both of them will end up taking refuge in gadgets, finding other commitments, seeking the embrace of another, or simply looking for ways to flee what has become an uncomfortable closeness. .



226. *Young married couples should be encouraged to develop a routine that gives a healthy sense of closeness and stability through shared daily rituals. These could include a morning kiss, an evening blessing, waiting at the door to welcome each other home, taking trips together and sharing household chores. Yet it also helps to break the routine with a party, and to enjoy family celebrations of anniversaries and special events. We need these moments of cherishing God's gifts and renewing our zest for life. As long as we can celebrate, we are able to rekindle our love, to free it from monotony.*

*Preparing for a crisis is not like signing a fire insurance policy, which protects you from a danger that can be extremely destructive but is very unlikely to happen.*

Crisis is certainly part of every household's story.

"The life of every family is marked by all kinds of crises, yet these are also part of its dramatic beauty" (AL 232).

Immediately Francis continues:

*"Couples should be helped to realize that surmounting a crisis need not weaken their relationship; instead, it can improve, settle and mature the wine of their union. Life together should not diminish but increase their contentment; every new step along the way can help couples find new ways to happiness. Each crisis becomes an apprenticeship in growing closer together or learning a little more about what it means to be married. There is no need for couples to resign themselves to an inevitable downward spiral or a tolerable mediocrity. On the contrary, when marriage is seen as a challenge that involves overcoming obstacles, each crisis becomes an opportunity to let the wine of their relationship grow and improve. Couples will gain from receiving help in facing crises, meeting challenges and acknowledging them as part of family life. Experienced and trained couples should be open to offering guidance, so the couples will not be unnerved by these crises or tempted to hasty decisions. Each crisis has a lesson to teach us; we need to learn how to listen to it with the ear of the heart."*

The last sentence of the Lord's Prayer speaks of 'temptation', which in its original meaning has a wider and less negative sense: it is the moment of trial, of crisis. Jesus teaches us to ask the Father to spare us the trial, but in the meantime the whole journey he makes with the twelve leads straight there, to a trial so intense that it becomes passion and death. There is little to understand, according to our criteria, and much to follow, as his and our mother did, even to the point of being at the cross.

It is the same patient perseverance that she asks of John in the dream at the age of nine: "In due time you will understand everything".

*"Every crisis can be a new 'yes', enabling love to be renewed, deepened and inwardly strengthened." (AL 238)*

Chapter VI speaks frankly and realistically about many possible crises, where neither the good will nor the experience of the individual is sufficient.

***"Every crisis can be a new 'yes', enabling love to be renewed, deepened and inwardly strengthened." (AL 238)***

It is here that throughout the chapter there is repeated insistence on the indispensable mutual support and accompaniment that couples and families are called to give each other. Of all the ways in which husband, wife and children finally become the primary protagonists of family pastoral work today, this is perhaps the first, the

most potentially effective, the most necessary, and also the most Salesian. To be a 'sacrament of presence' among families is a splendid way of living the preventive system and the charism of Don Bosco. But we will talk about this in the next issue.

## FOR PERSONAL AND GROUP REFLECTION

- Is the evangelical perspective where happiness and persecution, pain and new life, crisis and rebirth are so coexistent already part of my/our experience or is it still rather unrealistic?
- In the holiness of the Salesian family there are many people who, through the witness of their lives, can help me/us to enter more into the paschal dynamic that is part of everyone who follows Jesus. We can get to know more one of these figures who we still know little about.
- "An unfinished product, needing to grow, a work in progress": this is said of marriage [AL 218] but it also applies to the personal journey of each person. How do I look at

my own limitations and those of others? Do I know how to go beyond irritation and complaints, and with patience and mercy (towards myself as well as towards others) restart the journey, trusting and entrusting myself in prayer rather than expecting quick results "in my own way"?

- St Francis de Sales is a great master in this art of accepting limitations and growing in peace. A few of his pages can become a valuable support for this kind of conversion.
- The preventive system of caring for daily relationships to grow stronger together and be prepared for the inevitable moments of crisis. Are "always giving each other a kiss in the morning, blessing each other every evening, waiting for the other and welcoming him or her when he or she arrives, going out sometimes together, sharing household chores" and/or similar 'love crafting' methods part of our preventive system?
- Let us not forget three other fundamental instruments of the art of love to which Pope Francis often returns: AL133 "In the family, three words need to be used. I want to repeat this! Three words: 'Please', 'Thank you', 'Sorry'. Three essential words!". "In our families when we are not overbearing and ask: 'May I?'; in our families when we are not selfish and can say: 'Thank you!'; and in our families when someone realizes that he or she did something wrong and is able to say 'Sorry!', our family experiences peace and joy".

## KNOW YOURSELF

## UNITED IN PRAYER FOR UKRAINE.

Let us surrender Ukraine to Mary Help of Christians: Let us join together in prayer and "Let us ask the Lord earnestly that this land may see brotherhood flourish and overcome hurts, fears and differences", as Pope Francis has invited us to do.

<https://www.admadonbosco.org/preghiere/novena-to-mary-help-of-christians-promoted-by-st.-john-bosco?lang=en>

Whoever would like to help the Salesians in Ukraine can make their donation

CIRCOSCRIZIONE "MARIA AUSILIATRICE" PIEMONTE E VALLE D'AOSTA"

IBAN: IT80B0306909606100000115761

Reason of payment: Ukraine

Dear ADMA friends of Ukraine,

We are writing to you from the Primary ADMA of Valdocco in Turin, from the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians.

We are very saddened to read the news and see the pictures coming from your beautiful country. We hope that you are all well and we are certain that faith and hope in the help of our mother Help of Christians is alive and strong in each of you.



We pray that everything will soon be resolved and that peace will return to your hearts, to your country and to the world. We have asked the whole association and the whole Salesian family in the world to join in prayer.

We also wish, as far as possible, to be close to you with a concrete help to support you in your daily emergencies. If you can, write to us sharing your news, situation and needs. We are a family gathered and united under the mantle of our heavenly mother, who surely listens to and protects her children and intercedes for an end to the war.

We greet you all with great affection, keeping you in our hearts and in our prayers and we place you at the feet of our blessed mother in her house which our Father Don Bosco built in Turin

We look forward to hear from you

The Council and the whole Primary ADMA of Turin Valdocco

## **REGULATIONS**

### **ARTICLE 8 - AGGREGATION**

Last month we dealt with Article 7 on the erection of local associations.

Following this erection, article 8 states that the request to join the Primary Association of the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians in Turin - Valdocco should be presented as soon as possible.

This is a characteristic feature of the ADMA and expresses not only a juridical fact, but first of all a spiritual link of communion with the centre of the Association and a concrete link with all the groups around the world. Through such an aggregation, the full membership of the Association is obtained and one can enjoy the spiritual advantages linked to it.

The Provincial fills in the application form for aggregation to the Primary and sends it with a copy of the Decree of Erection and the written consent of the diocesan Bishop, when this is required, that is for diocesan ADMA, those of other Religious Institutes and those of other Groups of the Salesian Family.

Once these documents have been obtained, the Primary ADMA sends to the local ADMA the Certificate of aggregation, signed by the Rector of the Shrine, as well as by the President and the Animator of the Primary ADMA. This document, which should be displayed in one's own church or in the headquarters of the group, is the official document of belonging to the world Association.

For each member, the true testimony of belonging will have to take place in daily life, through devotion to Jesus in the Eucharist and to Mary Help of Christians, with the commitment to spread it to all those we meet along the path of life.

Andrea and Maria Adele Damiani

## 4TH CENTENARY OF THE DEATH OF SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES

### MAN LOVED BY GOD



God wants us all to be saved, but not only that: God wants us all to be saints and this way, which Francis de Sales would call "Devotion", is a way of life according to the Gospel lived intensely. According to the Gospel our life, Christian holiness, makes existence alive, vibrant and above all life-giving. Holiness, that is, the devout life according to St Francis de Sales, is proposed for consecrated persons, lay people, for all

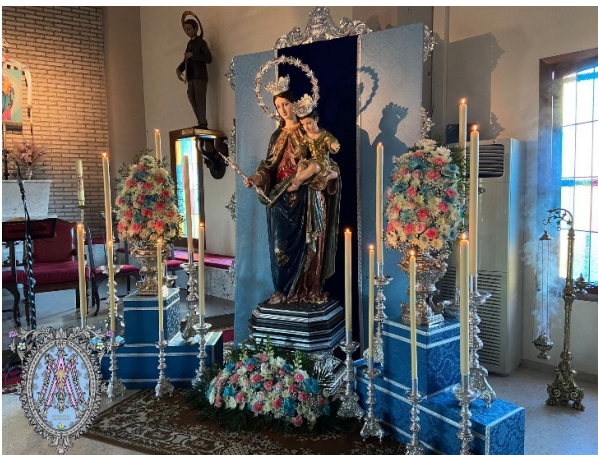
walks of life, a way of perfection according to charity.

In this [video](#), Fr Michele Molinar, Provincial Vicar and ICP Delegate for Formation, recounts the human and spiritual life of St Francis de Sales from a pastoral perspective.

<https://www.infoans.org/en/sections/news/item/14636-rmg-st-francis-de-sales-from-a-pastoral-perspective-a-cycle-of-5-videos-is-underway>

### FAMILY EVENTS

#### ASSOCIATION OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS (GRANADA-ZAIDIN)



Solemn veneration of Mary Help of Christians.

On the 2nd of January a solemn veneration of our Mother took place, as the city of Granada and its diocese celebrated the feast of Mary Help of Christians on that day.

This event took place on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the Salesians in Granada.

This celebration in the diocese of Granada is held on the occasion of the liberation of Granada by the Catholic Monarchs. On Friday, 2nd January 1492, at 3pm, the Catholic

Monarchs entered Granada. In the charter of erection of the cathedrals of Granada, Guadix and Almería, dated 21st May 1492, it is stated that every Wednesday of the year a canon is to celebrate mass "on the exaltation of the holy faith, on the surrender of the city of Granada". Pope St Pius X allowed this same feast to be celebrated under the invocation of Our Lady Help of Christians.

## BROTHERHOOD AND SOLIDARITY FOR ADMA AT TRIANA



After the February meeting of Adma training, a group of members shared a fraternal snacks.

This initiative is celebrated every year during the annual campaign of Manos Unidas because everything collected on this occasion goes to this NGO.

This moment of fraternity and solidarity helps us to feel part of the universal Church and to be little builders of the Kingdom of God.

## 24TH, A SPECIAL DAY – ADMA OF MALAGA



Mary brings us together every day of our lives, but especially on the 24th of each month.

The devotion to Mary Help of Christians is most evident in her Shrine, a meeting place for dozens of people who come together around Mary to celebrate Jesus, her Son.

Every person in the pews desires something special on that day, There are those who say that life is 24 to 24, and they are right.

Don Bosco, who 'instilled' in us his love for Mary, gave us her name, her title, her Help.

Cooperating together in the project inherited

from that dreamer, we are committed to our Mother's mission for those who suffer, for those who need us, for the young.

United, we ask for Mary's intercession for our concerns and for the sufferings of the world.

We will continue to trust in our Help of Christians, to be captivated by her smile, to protect ourselves under her mantle; to listen to those who need us, bringing the presence of Our Lady to every corner of the world and enriching our souls with the teachings of Jesus, proclaiming his Gospel which is relevant. We will continue without hesitation to collaborate in the daily life of our Shrine where Christ in the Tabernacle awaits us.

## 82ND ANNIVERSARY OF AGGREGATION TO THE PRIMARY ADMA OF TURIN

The President Donatella Casano explained, on behalf of the whole group, the desire to deepen more and more the meaning of the link between our group and all the groups to the primary ADMA of Valdocco and to the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians.





We really feel part of a big family.

After two years it was very nice to meet again, even if from a distance, but with our hearts united under the mantle of Mary Help of Christians!

In the reflection prepared by Donatella on ADMA's regulations entitled "ADMA and the shrine of Mary Help of Christians" we were very struck by the emphasis on ARTICLE 9 - Communion with the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians in Turin.

The Association of Mary Help of Christians is vitally united with the Shrine of Valdocco, Turin... and cultivates a special communion of

dialogue and solidarity.

A journey that takes us forward together in our lives, in communion and dialogue, always guided by Mary Help of Christians! The President of ADMA Sicily, Salvo Di Maio, some members of the Council, the animator Fr Paolo Cicala, and many groups from all over Sicily were present, along with us from the Primary ADMA. Our Lady continues to call us to be her witnesses on the streets of the world.

Rosanna and Daniele Aiassa.

## THANK YOU, MICHELE

On behalf of the Council, we would like to thank Michele Belotti for his faithful and precise work on the layout of Adma Online since 2007 over the past 15 years.

May Our Lady reward him for this precious contribution in increasing the devotion to Her.

May we always entrust all his intentions to Her in prayer.

## SEND AN ARTICLE AND PHOTOS

An article and a photo of a formation meeting, the commemoration of the 24th of Mary Help of Christians, a volunteer activity that you carry out

The article (.doc format, **max 1200 characters** without counting spaces) and a maximum of 2 photographs (digital format jpg and and not less than 1000px wide), provided with a title and / or a short description, must be sent to **adma@admadonbosco.org**

It is essential to indicate in the subject of the email "Family Chronicle" and in the text the data of the author (name, surname, place of the shot, Adma group you belong to, city, country)

By submitting, you automatically authorise ADMA to process, publish, even partially, and disseminate the article and photographs in any form. The images may be published, at the discretion of the editorial staff on the site <https://www.admadonbosco.org>, and / or in other ADMA publications, accompanied by a caption.