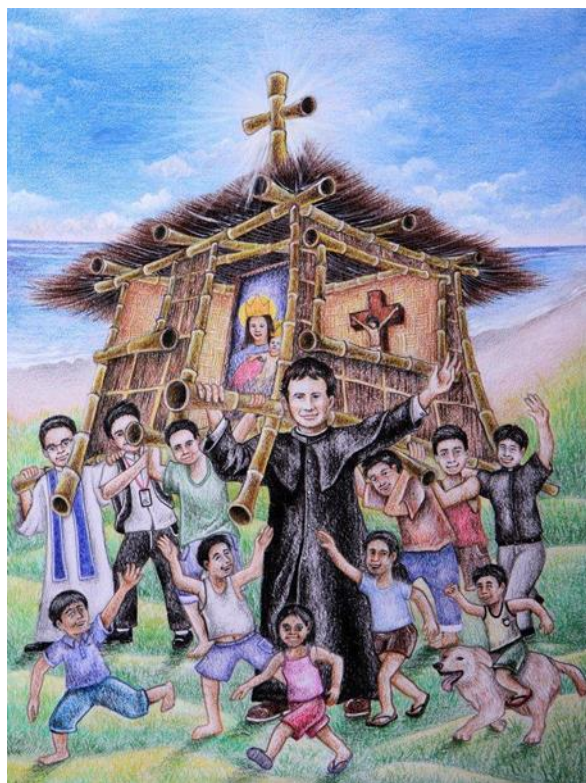


## MARY INVITES US TO BE JOYFUL AND NOT TO LOSE HOPE

The month of January is a time dear to the whole Salesian Family because of the strong Salesian tone that characterizes it, and all the initiatives for the solemn celebration of the feast of our father and teacher Don Bosco.

Guided by Mary Help of Christians we want to open our hearts to peace and joy in order to bear courageous witness to the Gospel in the family and in the world. In a world marked by so many wars, so much suffering, injustice, division and hostility, we must not lose hope, keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, not forgetting that we are made for God, for heaven and for eternity. "The darkness is passing away and already the true light appears". Mary is with us and she fights with us and for us that we may not lose hope, that we may be at peace and be joyful. In this spirit, we also want to remember the centenary year of the apparitions at Fatima and its message of peace for all mankind. The words of St Paul to the Philippians, "Rejoice in the Lord always" can be considered as the motto and programme of life of Don Bosco. The joy within him, born of faith and union with Jesus, was the source of his Christian work.



The Strenna of the Rector Major for 2017 "WE ARE FAMILY! Every home, a school of life and love" is a special gift in close harmony with the path that our Association has been following for some years. We welcome it as a further stimulus and a confirmation that we should continue on the same path, knowing that Mary Help of Christians is with us and that Don Bosco invites us to practise his charism today with particular attention to the family.

This new Strenna is suggested by the priority that the Church asks us to give to an ever greater and more effective pastoral care of families. Pope Francis chose to dedicate two synods to reflection on the Family, in continuity with some pastoral aspects he had already proposed in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* in 2013. These were the Extraordinary Synod of 2014 and the Ordinary Synod of 2015. These synods were followed by the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, signed on 19 March 2016.

The Church is asking us, the Salesian Family of Don Bosco, to give priority everywhere in the Salesian world to the pastoral formation of the family. As every year, the Strenna is addressed to each and every one of the members and groups of the Salesian Family, in order to raise awareness in the liveliest way possible of our task and our duty to families, so that it becomes the service of accompaniment and help which is expected of us.

We continue on our journey in communion with the whole Salesian Family. We wish you a fruitful novena and feast of Don Bosco.

Mr Lucca Tullio, President  
Fr Pierluigi Cameroni SDB, Spiritual Animator

## 5. Love in marriage (second part)

Fr Silvio Roggia, SDB

### Love hopes all things

There are two parts in the beatitudes, clearly recognizable in the Greek text. There are 36 words in the first part which includes the first four beatitudes, and 36 also in the second part which includes the words 'merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, and those persecuted for righteousness' sake.

Between the first and the second there is a change. In the first four beatitudes, the poor in spirit are urged to open their hearts and to be hungry and thirsty only for what is pleasing to God. In the second part, it is no longer the disciple who is the main agent. It is God himself who leads the dance. The disciples are called to enter 100% into the dynamics of the Kingdom of God, to be merciful 'like the Father' with pure hearts until they see God and see life and the world with God's eyes.

Love that hopes all things travels on the same wavelength. The last four beatitudes do not promise any reward. The limits are pushed to the extreme. And what awaits us there is so infinitely large and magnificently beautiful that anything that smacks of limit, weakness or fragility no longer frightens. Everything is but a beginning, a cradle of love, of life and joy that are endless and are there for us, our sure inheritance.

This phrase speaks of the hope of one who knows that others can change, mature and radiate unexpected beauty and untold potential. Each person, with all his or her failings, is called to the fullness of life in heaven. There, fully transformed by Christ's resurrection, every weakness, darkness and infirmity will pass away. There the person's true being will shine forth in all its goodness and beauty. (AL 116-117)

This is the way of thinking of the Magnificat where the protagonist of all that Mary sings is the Almighty and where the poor and hungry are raised up and filled with good things.

The Beatitudes are in perfect harmony with St Paul's hymn to love. These eight verses Mt. 5, 3-10 should be learned by heart and preserved in the memory.

### Love endures all things

*Panta hypomenei*: This means that love bears every trial with a positive attitude. (AL 118). Translations are capable of conveying the meaning only up to a certain point. Charity that is able to 'stand under the weight' would probably be closer to the original. But rather than from the dictionary we get the meaning better from the Mysteries of the Rosary. There we see what the true meaning of charity that 'endures all things' when we look into the face of Love incarnate on the journey from Gethsemane to Golgotha.

Here, too, we need a change of perspective or rather, a true conversion, which means changing our customary way of understanding life. The 'persecution' of which the last beatitude speaks is not an accident to be steered clear of and avoided at all costs. Rather, it is the culmination or point of arrival. It is the "it is finished" of that Friday afternoon that changed history forever. Sometimes we are so concerned about physical pain that we cannot see that beyond it there can be such a magnitude and power of love, of goodness, of forgiveness, such a force for change, that the pain becomes grace and becomes the mystery of salvation. "For the sake of the joy that was set before him, [he] endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12.2).

The 'Stabat Mater': Mary stands beneath the Cross (hypomenei!). This is the culmination or point of arrival of the 'yes' she said at Nazareth. This is the culmination of her virginity - total abandonment to the mystery which enshrouded her life, and the culmination of her motherhood. It is captured beautifully in Michelangelo's Pietà: Mary holds in her arms her Son who has been taken down from the cross, the same Son to whom she gave





birth, the Son who took his bodily features from her. She is the young mother in those infinite pangs giving life to all of us, members of her Son.

To convince us of the power of love that 'endures all things' Pope Francis chooses a long quote from a modern prophet, to whom he dedicates an entire page. Here I report only a few lines, but it is worth meditating on all the words of Martin Luther King. Pope Francis says:

"The person who hates you most has some good in him; even the nation that hates you most has some good in it; even the race that hates you most has some good in it. And when you come to the point that you look in the face of every man and see deep down within him what religion calls 'the image of God', you begin to love him in spite of [everything]. No matter what he does, you see God's image there. There is an element of goodness that he can never sluff off.... (sermon of Martin Luther King at Montgomery, Alabama, 17 November 1957 - in AL 118).

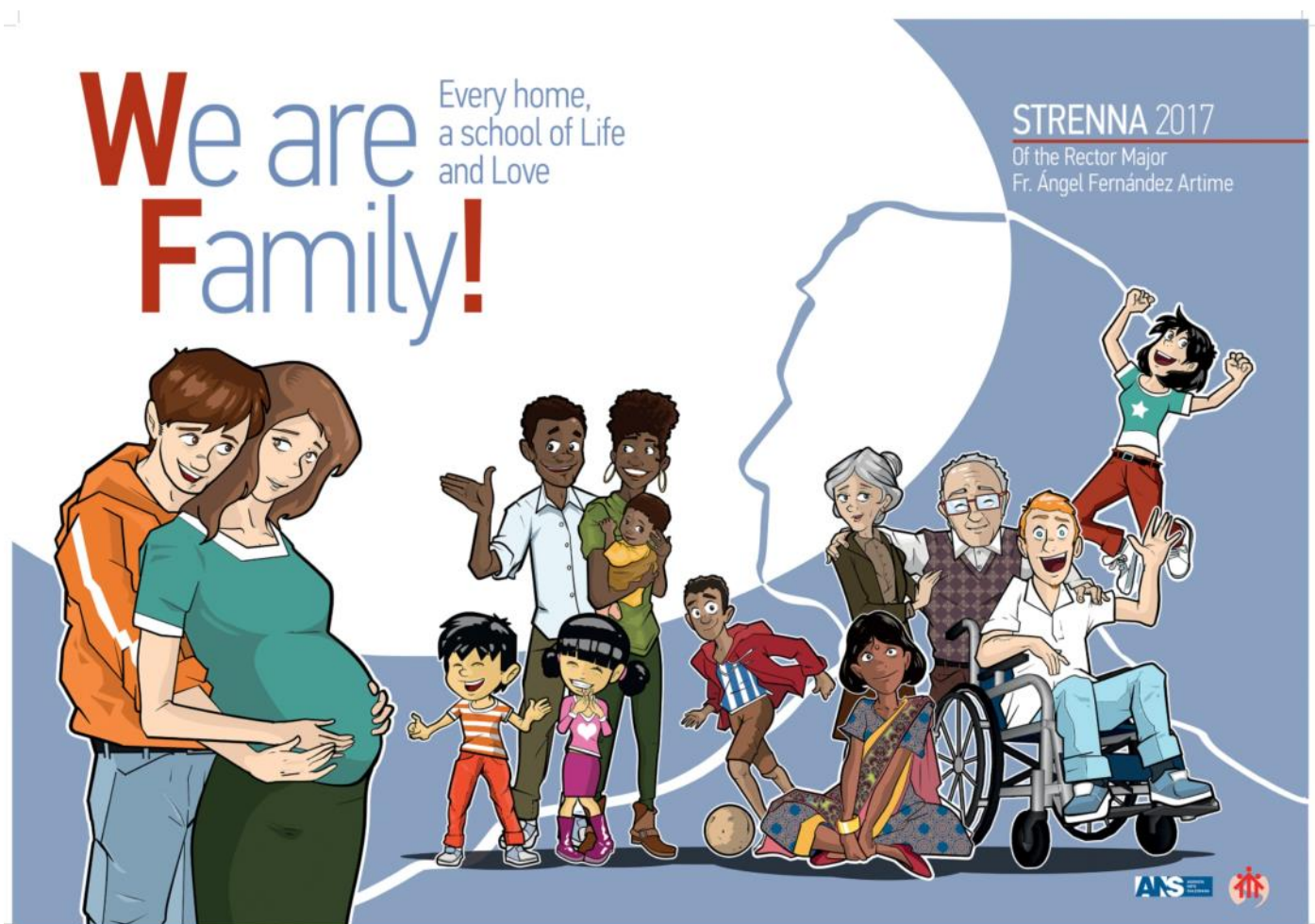
Seeds to be opened...

#### √ LOVE HOPES ALL THINGS

Accepting the invitation of Pope Francis I contemplate in the faces of those with whom I live every day the 'fullness of life' to which everyone is called and destined.

#### √ LOVE BEARS ALL THINGS

In prayer I present my small or large 'sorrowful mysteries' to Jesus and Mary, asking them for the strength to live them with greater love.



## Don Bosco, in a family without a father

As a comment on the Strenna for 2017 and in preparation for the feast of Don Bosco we look again at a passage that takes us back to the origins of our charism.



*I was not yet two years old when the merciful Lord hit us with a sad bereavement. My dearly loved father died unexpectedly. He was strong and healthy, still young and actively interested in promoting a good Christian upbringing for his offspring. One day he came home from work covered in sweat and imprudently went down into a cold cellar. That night he developed a high temperature, the first sign of a serious illness. Every effort to cure him proved vain. Within a few days, he was at death's door. Strengthened by all the comforts of religion, he recommended to my mother confidence in God, then died, aged only thirty-four, on 12 May 1817.*

*I do not know how I reacted on that sad occasion. One thing only do I remember, and it is my earliest memory. We were all going out from the room where he had died, and I insisted on staying behind.*

*My grieving mother addressed me, "Come, John, come with me,"*

*"If papa's not coming, I don't want to come," I answered.*

*"My poor son," my mother replied, "come with me; you no longer have a father."*

That is how Don Bosco, 56 years later, described this sad event in his life. Don Bosco was normally very reticent when he spoke of himself, particularly when it came to expressing his feelings, but in these few lines he allowed his tears to be seen, and his inability as a small child to understand what was going on when he realized that his father was not moving and not answering, and on seeing the tears of his mother, now a widow, on that day when she saw her life completely changed.

It is highly unlikely according to one author that the memory of that moment remained alive in Don



Bosco. The same author says it is more likely that he was remembering what he was told by adults when he was still a child. In any case Don Bosco is speaking about the new situation in which the family found itself. It was no longer like other 'normal' families. He would have to learn to grow up and mature without a father figure, but with a mother who certainly showed exceptional qualities. We can deduce this from all that Don Bosco said with great sobriety.

It shows the great human and Christian stature of this peasant woman, a widow and mother, with a family of five to care for. She rejected the proposal of a second marriage which would have suited her very well. Her three sons would have been entrusted to a good guardian who would have taken good care of them. "A guardian is a friend" she said "but I am the mother of my children. I could never forsake them even if they gave me all the gold in the world." And Don Bosco tells how his mother took great care "to instruct her sons in their religion, teaching them obedience and keeping them occupied in things suited to their age".

This shows us how much young John was affected by his situation as an orphan, and how in the family he could enjoy the deep love of a mother who devoted her life totally to her children. She was their first and most important catechist. She taught them to be responsible and honest workers and to be charitable towards those who were poor. She was a mother who, even amid so many material difficulties and so much distress, did everything possible to ensure that her son could follow the vocation and the call to the priesthood.

Since we have drawn attention to the experience of Don Bosco, it seems appropriate to refer to another great and holy woman of the Salesian Family, Maria Domenica Mazzarello. She also was affected by the situation of her family, even though it differed in some aspects from that of Don Bosco. Her family experienced a similar situation of poverty as was common among simple farmers, but the childhood and family of Maria Domenica Mazzarello were quite different. Maria Domenica did not grow up without a father. She was the eldest of a large family. She did not have to move away from her home village of Mornese, during her childhood and youth. Certainly, she shared the same climate of piety. In fact, it was a different family model which deeply marked the personality of Mary Mazzarello.

Critical studies show that he died on 11 May 1817.

Istituto Storico Salesiano, *Fonti Salesiane. Don Bosco e la sua opera*, LAS-Roma, 2014, 1173-1174.

"Don Bosco traces his first memory back to the death of his father. This is highly unlikely since it occurred when John was only two years old. It is probable that he was recalling what adults in the family circle had told him in later years." - Giacomo Dacquino, *Psicologia di Don Bosco*, SEI, Torino, 1988, 19.

The paper can be read at the following site:

[www.admadonbosco.org](http://www.admadonbosco.org)

and here: [www.donbosco-torino.it/](http://www.donbosco-torino.it/)

For every communication you can contact

the following email address: [pcameroni@sdb.org](mailto:pcameroni@sdb.org)

## FAMILY CHRONICLE

TURIN - VALDOCCO - 26th MARIAN DAY



On Sunday 4 December 2016, the ADMA in Piedmont, Valle d'Aosta and Lombardy celebrated the 26th Marian Day in a Marian atmosphere of communion and joy. In front of about 300 people, Fr Silvio Roggia, SDB, as part of the formation programme inspired by the exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, took as his theme the song of love from St Paul's first letter to the Christians of Corinth. He emphasized four expressions that say it all: love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.

His talk was followed by a time of prayer and reflection on the formation programme. Then there were some testimonies of young people of ADMA who shared their sense of belonging to the Association in a beautiful way. They spoke also about some activities that they had been involved in

Mariangela and Gianluca Spesso then presented what the presence of Mary means for their family and how they lived as a couple and as a family in the light of her presence. Finally, Giusy Chiosso told her story as a member of ADMA for over thirty years and how Mary always surprised her with her grace and her help.

In the afternoon, in the shrine of Mary Help of Christians, after the communal recitation of the Rosary, there was solemn Mass, celebrated by Fr Cristian Besso, new Rector of the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians. In his homily, he invited the members to be shining witnesses, like alabaster that becomes trans-



parent with light. During the celebration 16 people became members of the Association: 11 from the ADMA Primary group, 2 from Arese and 3 young people from the Shalom Community of Palazzolo sull'Oglio. This Marian Day showed once again how Mary Help of Christians accompanies and supports the association by renewing it and letting us see how the bud reborn in Valdocco is growing in beauty and quality

## COLOMBIA - THE ADMA CENTRES OF DUITAMA RECEIVE THE DIPLOMA OF AFFILIATION TO ADMA TURIN

Duitama, Colombia - November 2016 - To participate fully in the life of the Association of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA), the Regulations of the Association foresee that each ADMA centre be canonically erected and affiliated to ADMA at the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin. On 30 November last, 16 ADMA centres of Duitama, Colombia, received the Diploma of Affiliation during Mass celebrated by Fr Julio Olarte, Delegate for the Salesian Family of the Province of Colombia-Bogotá.



## FIRST ADMA CONGRESS IN INDIA

On 1 December 2016, the members of ADMA from 7 groups in Kerala (India) in the Salesian Province of Bangalore and two from the FMA Province celebrated **the first ADMA Marian Congress in the history of the Salesian Family in India**. 140 members participated in this historic event which took place in the first Salesian presence of Kerala at Don Bosco Vaduthala, Cochin. This Marian Congress was opened by the Provincial Fr Joyce Thonikuzhiyil and chaired by the national delegate Fr Noel Maddhichetty SDB. Sister Elizabeth Pothan, Provincial Vicar of the FMA, also addressed the assembly. They urged the members of ADMA to take their mission seriously spreading the two devotions dear to Don Bosco, devotion to the Eucharist and devotion to the Virgin Mary. The Provincial President of ADMA, Doctor Varghese, presented the topic "The Virgin Mary, Mother and model for all mothers". During Eucharistic Adoration we prayed for the release of Fr Tom Uzhunalil SDB, captured by terrorists in Yemen.

In the afternoon, all the members of Congress went to the Marian Shrine of Vallarpadam for the Eucharist celebrated by Fr Joyce Thonikuzhiyil SDB, and Fr Joe Kallupura. They addressed a special greeting to all the participants, to the chairpersons and group leaders, on the occasion of this first historic event.

The main coordinator of this Marian Congress was the president of ADMA in Vaduthala, Kochi. The Congress decided to hold an ADMA Congress at national level in 2020. This was a big wish of the national delegate of the Salesian Family, Fr Maddhichetty.

We thank our Mother, Mary Immaculate, Help of Christians, for the unique role she has in the lives of all the members of ADMA. The Congress was celebrated at the beginning of the centenary of the apparitions at Fatima: She is helping us in the fight against evil and in our prayer for the victory of peace (Fr Joe Kallupura SDB, Spiritual Animator, Bangalore).

