

## MARY LEADS US TO GOD

Dear friends,

We are now fully immersed in this time of Lent as we prepare to celebrate and relive the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The period of quarantine we are experiencing is a new opportunity that God gives us to rekindle the gift we have received (cf. 2 Tim 1: 6). Each one has his or her own personal vocation, some to marriage, some to life in ministry and some to consecrated life. However, we all share a common vocation as children of the same Mother, Mary, the Mother of Jesus and our mother.

We know that Lent is a time of conversion, a time to return to God and put all things "in their proper place". It is a time to "order" our lives. But the question arises: how do we do it, where do we start? To answer, we need to contemplate Mary, to fix our gaze on her life because she it is who leads us to Jesus, to God. Mary leads us by the hand to an encounter with the God of life. We say "*Ad Jesum, per Mariam*" which is the same as saying "*Ad Deum, per Mariam*".

To undertake this preparatory journey and get ready for Easter, we must let go of the ballast that weighs us down and leaves us overburdened on our journey, and the dust on the road that obscures the light and splendour of our being children of Mary our Mother. Without our realizing it, we have been marked, at times by a lack of passion, by fatigue, routine, lack of hope, a certain anger and many other specks of dust that have attached themselves to us. This is a time of purification, a time to remove everything that prevents us from being fully alive and enjoying the gift of daily life. This allows us to see the presence of



God in others. We ask our Mother to help us to purify ourselves, so that we can shine again with the baptismal light, the Light of Life, which is Love.

This season of lent is a new opportunity that God gives us to rekindle the gift received (cf. 2 Tim 1: 6). Each one has his or her own personal vocation, some to marriage, some to ministry, and some to consecrated life. However, we all share a common vocation as children of the same Mother/ Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is our mother. To travel this preparatory path and be ready for the Easter experience, we need to let go of the ballast that

weighs us down and leaves us overburdened on the way, and the dust on the road that has obscured the light and splendor of our being children of Mary. Without our realizing it, we have been marked at times by a lack of passion, by fatigue, routine, lack of hope, and a certain anger. Many other specks of dust have attached themselves to us. This is a time of purification, a time to remove everything that prevents us from living fully and enjoying the gift of daily life. It allows us to see the presence of God in others. We

ask our Mother to help us purify ourselves, so that we can shine again with the baptismal light, the Light of Life, which is Love.

Prayer is a wonderful way to help us recover the path of our vocation. It is a prayer that does not stop at words and does not become mere repetition, a prayer that is profound, that imitates the filial prayer of Jesus to the Father, a prayer that touches the heart of each one of us. God looks (and speaks) to the heart while on many occasions we look at the outside (cf. 1 Sam 16, 7). God really wants to meet us in a heart-to-heart meeting that can transform our lives.

Let us take courage and allow ourselves to be touched by God, letting his grace penetrate our superficiality and flood our being. It will certainly change our lives, perhaps it will "complicate" our lives, but we will experience his love more fully, we will feel his presence more alive and active in each of us. In this way we will be united to his resurrection because we will be the first to be raised by him. This prayer will not leave us indifferent to the reality of our world. It will be a prayer that contemplates the world, our closest reality, and the people we know by first name and surname, with the compassionate heart of Jesus. It does not lead us to look the other way, but draws us closer, touches us and even "stains" us in order to cleanse and purify us. It calls us to restore dignity to those most in need and alleviate the suffering and pain of those who are considered the least, the abandoned or "discarded", as Mary did throughout her life. Her example is a lasting service to those in need: Elizabeth in the months before she gave birth, the couple in Cana during their marriage celebration, the disciples in their moments of doubt after the death of Jesus. Mary, who is all pure and immaculate, "dirtied" her hands to serve others. She got involved in people's lives because she was nourished through her maternal relationship with Jesus and her filial relationship with God.

Dear friends, what a beautiful opportunity we have during these days to prepare ourselves for the Lord's Passover, through purification, prayer and service. These are the traditional ways that the Church invites us to follow: fasting, prayer and almsgiving towards our brothers and sisters, our fellow human beings. How beautiful it would be if - as is already happening in so many places - ADMA were to become more and more the maternal presence of God for the life of the people! The members of ADMA ask every day for the gift of living their



vocation as a grace, in intimate relationship with God. They become a simple, profound, cordial school of prayer for all and, at the same time, serve the most needy of our world in a discreet, humble and simple way.

Undoubtedly, brothers and sisters, ADMA can become an attractive path for our world, because it has a concrete gift to offer in the Salesian style. In ADMA we all have a place, young people, adults and the elderly. We are all needed, and we all have a lot to contribute.

We ask our Mother, Mary Help of Christians, that this time may serve to lead us to God and to serve others.

Renato Valera, *President ADMA Valdocco.*

Alejandro Guevara, *Spiritual Animator ADMA Valdocco*

## ADMA formation programme 2020-2021

"Dream...and help others to dream!"

### 6. THE PEDAGOGY OF TRUST

We know that there are some educators whose pastoral ministry is characterized by distance and discipline. There are some, a bit like pharisees, who look down on young people. Others think of young people as simple and passive recipients of a ministry conceived and designed by adults without involving the young people. Salesian pastoral practice is not like that, because it is based on a very precise pedagogical option, which we can call without doubt a pedagogy of trust. It starts from a very clear premise which is the conviction that grace dwells in every young person, that even the person we might consider the most unfortunate has gifts and talents which every educator is called to recognize and value.

This brings us to the great theme of trust, that is, the certainty that young people, before being hurt by sin and the negative events of life, are children of a God who has always loved them and filled them with his love and his gifts. Don Bosco learned this from St Francis de Sales, who more than many others in the Church recognized the presence of God's love in everyone, even in the one who is rejected. Just as Jesus was discarded by the builders but became the cornerstone, young people who were discarded by society became the cornerstone of the Salesian Congregation at its birth. Just as the Father rehabilitated Jesus through the resurrection, so Don Bosco made young people protagonists of his educational mission, with the aim of rehabilitating young people and making them authentic subjects of the mission.

This is our history too, not only that of young people. It is precisely in this sense that Pope Francis affirms that young people, "have helped the Church to re-discover its mission" (Message to GC28). This is exactly the case, and it must be reaffirmed with great force, because here lies **the prophetic force of Don Bosco's charisma**: "Far from being passive agents or spectators of missionary work, they became, beginning with their own circumstances - in many cases they were "religious and social illiterates" - the main protagonists of the entire founding process. Salesianity is born precisely from this encounter capable of arousing prophecies and visions: welcoming, integrating and giving growth to their best qualities as a gift for others, especially for those who are marginalised and abandoned from whom nothing is expected." (Message to GC28). We must never forget that young people are the co-founders of the Salesian Congregation!

We are called to be and act like Jesus who welcomes children. He shows his affection for them by embracing them. He makes them happy and aware of their abilities by blessing them. He accompanies them with confidence on the path they are to follow. (cf. Mk 10,16). The evangelist Mark summarizes the preventive system from a Gospel perspective in three actions - Jesus **embraces** the little ones, **blesses** them and **puts his hand on their heads**. We need to understand well what we are, what moves us and what we do. Our pastoral-educational action makes sense only if it is understood and carried out on this evangelical basis, recognizing that not everything is written and that things that are not written can sometimes be more important than those that are.

Don Bosco wanted ADMA to reach out to families, to society and the Church and to all who need help. He wanted to share his educational passion with those who, even who may not called to dedicate themselves full time to the mission to the young, would like to live the Salesian spirit in the working and daily environment of life, imitating Mary Help of Christians. For Don Bosco devotion is "imitation", imitating the life of Mary, completely dedicated to the love of her Son and to the care of all her brothers and sisters. We come to the help of Christians, especially when their faith is in danger or needs to be awakened. We do this with our practical and simple itinerary of sanctification and apostolate.

ADMA is a journey of apostolic holiness inspired by the Salesian charism and spirit: God calls everyone to holiness. Prayer helps us to recognize the beauty and greatness of this journey and to bear witness to it. This gift is a call to be open to all that God wants to do through us and to be able, in our life, to thank God and rejoice in all that He does through each of us. The common vocation to holiness is specified in the light of the evangelical journey lived, interpreted and proposed by Don Bosco. In particular, we recall some of the values of the Salesian spirit: service and help, especially to those most in need, simplicity in the practices of piety, pastoral charity in apostolic and educational commitment, joyful fraternity and family spirit.

The courage to face reality and the powerful pedagogy of trust enable us to involve every young person and adult by sharing their talents. This will lead to co-responsibility in creating an environment in which all feel they are subjects of the mission to generate a particular form of the Church: in all our works "the Salesian will be the expert in summoning and generating this kind of dynamic without feeling that he is the boss" (*Message to GC28*). And Pope Francis adds, "Don Bosco's youngsters yesterday, and those of today's Salesian [world] were and are not mere recipients of a prior planned strategy but living protagonists of the oratory which was to be created. It is through them and with them that the Lord shows us his will and his dreams. We could call them co-founders of your houses, where the Salesian will be the expert in summoning and generating this kind of dynamic without feeling that he is the boss. This is a joint effort that reminds us that we are an "outgoing Church", and that mobilises us to do this: a Church capable of abandoning comfortable, secure and in some cases privileged positions, to find in the least the fruitfulness typical of the Kingdom of God. This is not a strategic choice, but a charismatic one. A fruitfulness sustained on the basis of the cross of Christ, which is always a scandalous injustice for those who have blocked their sensitivity to suffering or have come to terms with injustice towards the innocent. "As a Church, may we never fail to weep before these tragedies of our young. May we never become inured to them, for anyone incapable of tears cannot be a mother. We want to weep so that society itself can be more of a mother" (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, 75). (*Message to GC28*).

*For personal reflection*

- How do you regard young people? Do you believe in young people? What do you see in young people: a future, hope? How did Don Bosco regard young people? What did he see in them?
- Young people are the co-founders of the Salesian Congregation.
- Do I trust young people? Don't forget that God trusts you always.

*For prayer:* • Jesus welcomes the little ones (Mk 10: 13-16)

*People were bringing little children to him, for him to touch them. The disciples scolded them, but when Jesus saw this he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. In truth I tell you, anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' Then he embraced them, laid his hands on them and gave them his blessing.*

*For action* • How can I renew my trust in young people in my thoughts and actions?

## EDITORIAL NOTE

Dear friends, as you have noticed, since the beginning of 2021 ADMA online has been enriched with two features.

The first - "Getting to know each other" - is a space devoted to a different ADMA group every month. **Each group describes its own local situation and how it is faithful in living the charism of Don Bosco.** We all remain united to the two columns of Jesus in the Eucharist and Mary Help of Christians, but **the charism has found expression in many forms and the spirit has blown in many directions.** It is good that we get to know each other and rediscover each other united under the mantle of Mary.

The second is a brief study of the regulations of our association. Each month we will choose a short passage from the regulations and reflect on it to rediscover the richness of ADMA in the mind of Don Bosco and to live our identity.

We hope that these two features will be a resource for all our groups in the world.

## GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

### ADMA ARGENTINA - SUR

At present in Argentina there are more than one hundred Salesian works in two provinces: the Southern Argentina Province (ARS) under the patronage of Blessed Ceferino Namuncurá and the Northern Argentina Province (ARN) under the patronage of Blessed Artímedes Zatti.

The ADMA we present here is part of the Southern Argentina Province, which geographically covers an area of 1,237,994 square km and extends from Buenos Aires to Ushuaia, for a distance of 3,042 km.

*And now let's talk about ADMA ....*

**How and where did the association develop in your province or region?**

The first registration in Argentina of the existence of what was then called the "Association of the Devotees of Mary Help of Christians" was in 1887. LOCAL ADMA groups were promoted initially by the Salesians and later by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians who have recently joined in with enthusiasm.

The ADMA founded in the year 1887 belongs to the Salesian House of the Sacred Heart in the city of La Plata, capital of the Province of Buenos Aires. In a picture hanging beside the altar of Mary Help of Christians we read: "In this Church and on the altar of Mary Help of Christians, with the authorization of the Rector Major, in the year 1887 was erected the Confraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Help of Christians, in the church of the Salesians dedicated to the Sacred Heart, which is located in La Plata , March 04, 1949. Fr Pedro Ricaldone, Rector Major".

**Can you tell us how many local groups and how many members there are today?**

There are currently seventeen (17) local associations active in our province, including two that are in the process of being formed. Out of a total of 300 members we can say that 180 are active and the remaining 120 support us by their prayer: they are those who, due to their advanced age, health or personal circumstances, cannot



attend the meetings. We have 33 aspirants who are following the formation programme with a view to making the promise. The members are aged between 35 and 85 and are mostly women.

Each local ADMA has its own council which is in communication with the Provincial Council. Local councils and their members meet monthly but in some cases they meet every two weeks. Among those who meet monthly, most have made the date of the meeting coincide with the monthly commemoration of Mary Help of Christians and they conclude the meeting by participating in the Holy Mass.

### SCHEME OF THE MEETINGS:

The meetings begin with a time of prayer, usually Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Then there is a formation input based on the monthly ADMA ON-LINE and / or a review of the Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family. This is followed by some shared reflections on the signs of "these critical and difficult times", as John Paul II called them in the encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*, signs that challenge us to live as faithful witnesses of the Gospel. The meetings conclude with a sharing on the lives of the participants.

The Provincial Council meets three times a year:

- At the beginning of the year to organize the activities to be carried out during the year, drawing up the programme of formation, commitment and apostolate in harmony with the PRIMARY ADMA.
- In the middle of the year to consider the implementation of the programme, not for the purpose of mere control but to assess whether what was proposed was feasible and, based on the result, propose changes or suggest ways of implementing it.
- At the end of the year to evaluate what has been done.

### Can you tell us more about the life and activity of the association?

Two strong moments of communion are the feast of Mary Help of Christians in May and at the end of the year - generally in late November or early December - a provincial meeting of the local ADMA which is convened as an annual retreat. The traditional feast in May is not exclusive to ADMA but for the whole Salesian Family. It takes place every year on the Sunday before 24 May with a pilgrimage to the Basilica of Almagro. This date was chosen so that each local association can actively participate in the celebrations that take place in the Salesian Houses on 24 May. Traditionally it is the task of each local ADMA to organize, convene and develop the celebration of the feast but in recent years they have tried to involve all local branches of the Salesian Family. Although there is no National Council of ADMA in Argentina, the two Provincial Councils are in constant contact and carry out joint activities - as for example the National Congresses of 2012 and 2016 and the International Congress of 2019.



A recent example of this cooperation of ADMA at national level occurred in 2020 when, as we all know, the pandemic made it impossible to participate in person in worship. The Provincial Councils decided to relay on WhatsApp the months of preparation for the feast of Mary Help of Christians and the feast of Don Bosco. This invitation was extended not only to the members of

ADMA but to the whole Salesian Family and also to those who may not belong to any branch of the family but have a particular devotion to the Help of Christians and a love for the Salesian charism.

From 24 April to 23 May and then from 16 July to 15 August, daily reflections were sent early in the morning and again during the day. The evening ended with a Good Night message and a blessing from the Salesians who have joined this initiative.

We were surprised by the number of people who joined, including some from other countries. Many expressed a desire to receive the daily message and especially the blessing at the end of each day.

During the past year, due to the pandemic, none of the groups have been able to meet, but all have kept in touch with their members through social networks, especially WhatsApp. In several places ADMA members have been active in helping people in extreme poverty.





Our spiritual animator is Fr Vicente Ricchetti, a Salesian Priest. He is a member of the Salesian Community of San Justo, in the Province of Buenos Aires, where the Salesian Theologate is located. He is parish priest of the shrine dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He has a strong devotion to Mary and always insists that devotion to Mary Help of Christians is an essential Salesian virtue.



My name is Maria Ines Ursino. I have been president of the PROVINCIAL ADMA since 2012. I was elected that year and re-elected in 2016. Last year the whole Provincial Council should have been renewed but the pandemic made that impossible so we will carry on for the time being. With my husband Alfredo we have a beautiful family of seven children: five girls and two boys. From our eldest daughter, who is already married, we have our first granddaughter, Maria Emilia, and we are expecting the birth of our second grandchild at the end of March.

### What is your relationship with the other groups of the Salesian Family?

The Association has a good relationship with the Salesians, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the Salesian Cooperators and the Past Pupils of the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. There are 14 of the recognized groups of the Salesian Family in our area but distances make it difficult to maintain contact.

In our Province there is a Council of the Salesian Family, of which I am a member. We try to convene the different branches so that each is represented in the meetings, but, as I said, the geographical extension makes the personal participation of some of them difficult.

### Looking to the future, what ideas and plans do you have to maintain faith among the people and to promote love for Jesus in the Eucharist and entrustment to Mary?

We believe that to answer this question we need not go beyond the words of Don Angel expressed in this year's Strenna: "More than ever: presence and witness! That's right: more than ever there is a need for presence and witness. As presence, ours, and as witness the joy that comes from our hopeful faith because "faith and hope go forward together".

In the early days of Christianity when people saw the first Christians they said: "Look how they love each other!" Our goal is to make sure that when they see us, Salesians, Salesian sisters

and members of ADMA, and the way we live, as we love Jesus in the Eucharist and as we venerate Mary, they will also say: "Look how they live: praising God, trusting in Mary, in an attitude of service, of unconditional dedication to others, and always joyful", and that they will want to know more and live the same way.

**And for young people?** Once again, we stick to what Don Angel said: "... to young people, whom we will never leave alone (never, and especially not now!): they are waiting for us, with open arms, so that we can share their life, with a love that is capable of overcoming everything, because in all this, only love can triumph! We must dream the dream of the young again.

**Have you any suggestion to make to Primary ADMA so that it can carry on its commitment to animation on a world level and increase exchange and dialogue between groups?**

Even though we know that we are members of a lay Association, the reality is that the spiritual animation of a Salesian priest, brother or sister makes an important difference. This is seen from the fact that a local group might remain active or, unfortunately, [without one] may disappear.

Here it is our experience (and perhaps this happens also in other places) that many Salesians do not know what ADMA is and know nothing of what distinguishes other branches of the Salesian Family - their origin, foundations, aims, etc.

For this reason, we suggest that PRIMARY ADMA try to make sure that each group has an animator, and that the Provincial consider this appointment indispensable.

We know that the shortage of priests or religious may make what we are asking for difficult, but groups that currently do not have an animator are not asking for the animator to participate in all their meetings, but they want him or her to be available through social networks to accompany the group and to give advice.

Of the 17 groups currently existing in our Province only 5 have an animator, and one of these groups is in a parish which previously belonged to the Salesians but has been handed over to the Diocese.

**In conclusion, it only remains to say:**

Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco, Don Bosco and Mary Help of Christians, constitute a harmonious, lasting, inextinguishable unit. Mary was always a "presence, devotion and help" in the life of Don Bosco as she is in our personal lives and in the life of the Association. Through Mary Help of Christians we come to Jesus, and He becomes the centre of our lives. As Don Bosco used to say, "she did everything". We dare to add that she continues to do so. She is a living presence for each of us: to her we continually entrust our families, our children, our friends, the sick, our work, our projects, our worries .... and she "does not send us away empty-handed."

Maria Ines Ursino

## THE REGULATIONS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS TO STUDY AND PUT INTO PRACTICE OUR IDENTITY

### ARTICLE 1 - ACT OF FOUNDATION (second part)

Continuing the examination of the ACT OF FOUNDATION, it is evident that, from the moment of the planning of the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, in Don Bosco's apostolic vision devotion to Mary is a powerful force to consolidate and protect the Catholic faith of the Christian people.

In art. 31 of the Charter of Communion of the Salesian Family, we read: "*The world of the working classes is the natural and ordinary context in which we encounter the young, especially those most in need of help.*"

Don Bosco was aware of the need for Christians to unite, especially in difficult times. We must be united in doing good in order to counteract evil, to strengthen each other, to remain steadfast in the faith, to encourage us in our commitment to the evangelization, to life, to the family, and to education. We need to be united in prayer and action if we are to be a sign of the love of God and Mary for those who do not know this love, We need to be capable of spreading peace and communion among people.

In this task, more urgent now than ever, Mary Most Holy is a living presence among us. She continues her maternal mission as a mediator of grace for her children.

The title of Help of Christians is associated with that of Queen of Victories. History shows that the Church has always experienced her powerful help, especially in the hour of trial and the attacks of enemies. We see this, for example, in the battles against the Ottoman Empire - in Lepanto in 1571 and in Vienna in 1683 - and again in the liberation of Pius VII on 24 May 1814, which gave rise to the liturgical feast of Mary Help of Christians that was introduced in 1815.

This title is also associated with that of Mother of the Church. This is eloquently expressed in the picture in the Basilica in Turin: Our Lady is illuminated by the Holy Spirit and surrounded by the apostles and evangelists, as she extends her protection to the whole world.

May Mary's help enable us to be persevering in trials and to offer them as a sacrifice to God. This maternal and active presence of Our Lady is the foundation of the Association and the inspiration of the commitment of our members in the service of the Kingdom of God.

Andrea e Maria Adele Damiani

## FAMILY CHRONICLE

We draw your attention to some news items relating to ADMA published in ANS in recent weeks. These items are in various languages.

ADMA in East Timor -

<https://www.infoans.org/sezioni/notizie/item/12232-timor-est-fiorisce-l-associazione-di-maria-ausiliatrice-nel-paese>

ADMA in South Korea -

<https://www.infoans.org/sezioni/notizie/item/12284-corea-del-sud-a-seoul-nasce-il-secondo-gruppo-adma>

ADMA in Utrera (Spain) -

<https://www.infoans.org/sezioni/notizie/item/12317-espana-la-asociacion-de-maria-auxiliadora-de-utrer-a-comienza-a-festejar-su-125-aniversario-fundacional>

Other news of ADMA - Philippines -

<https://www.bosco.link/webzine/67908>

The paper can be read at the following site:

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

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