

MONTHLY MESSAGE

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MARY ENCOURAGES US TO MAKE SURE THAT PRAYER IS LIFE

Don Bosco founded the Association of Mary Help of Christians because he was amazed and surprised by the innumerable graces and miracles that people attributed to the intercession of the Help of Christians: "Every corner, every brick of this sacred edifice is reminiscent of a benefit, a grace obtained by this august Queen of Heaven." Mary is our help: we need to pray to her, to invoke her and to call on her mediation and patronage.

A typical characteristic of a member of ADMA is the ability to recognize the graces received through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians, of Don Bosco, and of the saints and blessed of the Salesian Family and to know how to give thanks, to report favours received, and to give an offering towards Salesian works. The true devotees of Mary Help of Christians are able to recognize the signs of her presence and her love, and for this they invoke her and thank her with a pure and open heart

Mary urges us to draw inspiration for our earthly life from her example. Her life was a web of joy and pain, of silence and an immense faith and trust in her Heavenly Father. Her whole life reminds us that nothing happens by accident: neither pain, nor joy, nor suffering, nor love. They are all graces given by God to lead us to eternal life. Mary teaches us to love and pray in Jesus and with Jesus, that is, to pray in the silence of our own soul and not only with our lips. We can love and pray even with the smallest gesture made in the name of her Son, such as patience, mercy, acceptance of pain and sacrifices made for others.

Mary urges us to live our prayer in union with God, in harmony with him, so that all prayer may be life. Only then will our hearts be filled with peace and joy, we will experience God as a close friend and talk with him as someone we know, enjoying familiarity with him and knowing that he is alive in our hearts. Mary wants our prayer to be a face-to-face conversation with God, talking to Jesus and listening to Jesus. When the prayer of our lips enters the heart and the mind, then we become witnesses that we cannot live without God. We are created in his image, and we cannot live without Him. God comes to our level, he draws us out of darkness and tells us: "Look, you're wrong, come back, I'm here as a merciful Father, I am here as your hope, your peace, your joy, and you will not find joy apart from the joy I give you." Let us make a decision to live in profound communion with God and to prefer our friendship with him to any other good. Mary is with us and helps us.

We extend a special greeting to the new Rector of the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, Fr Cristian Besso, whom we in the Primary ADMA Council have already had occasion to meet. We wish him all the best in his mission and assure him of our support and prayer. Article 9 of our Rules says. "The Association of Mary Help of Christians is vitally united to the Shrine of Valdocco in Turin. We can truly say that Mary not only intervened in the construction of the Basilica, according to the testimony of Don Bosco, but from there she extended her patronage worldwide. For that reason the Association is called to remain united to this holy place." For this charismatic and historic bond we wish to grow in communion and collaboration with the Rector of the Basilica and the whole pastoral community of the Shrine.



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

2. *The situation of the family and the challenges facing families*

Fr Silvio Roggia, SDB

Quoting John Paul II, Pope Francis begins the second chapter of *Amoris Laetitia* saying that we do well to focus on concrete realities, since “the call and the demands of the Spirit resound in the events of history”, and through these “the Church can also be guided to a more profound understanding of the inexhaustible mystery of marriage and the family”. (AL 31).

Libera nos Domine

With a realistic look, the Pope and the Synod Fathers touched on the great challenges that the family is facing in today's world. Seeing them one after the other they look like the sorrowful litany of requests for help that we used to recite in Latin when I was a child on rogation days, early in the morning when priest and people went in procession through the fields and vineyards praying: “*A fulgure et tempestate ... Libera nos Domine!*” (from lightning and tempest, deliver us Lord!).

There is an exaggerated individualism that distorts family ties. The pace of modern life, stress, social organization and work, and other cultural factors endanger the very possibility of permanent choices. Genuine freedom is confused with the idea that everyone can decide as they please. The theological ideal of marriage is too abstract, almost artificially constructed, and so far removed from the actual situation and the real possibilities of families that marriage seems no longer desirable and attractive, but quite the opposite. Emotional relationships have become like what happens to objects and the environment - everything has become disposable, to be used and then thrown away, wasted and broken. We live in a culture that encourages young people not to start a family, because they have few possibilities for the future. Marital crises are frequently met abruptly without the courage needed for patience, evaluation, mutual forgiveness, reconciliation and even sacrifice. The consumer society may also dissuade people from having children just to maintain their freedom and their way of life. There is a general feeling of helplessness in the face of the socio-economic reality that often ends up crushing families. The sexual exploitation of children constitutes one of the most scandalous and perverse realities of today's society. Migration is another sign of the times to be faced and understood with all its consequences for family life. Euthanasia and assisted suicide are serious threats to families all over the world. Families are often sick because of the enormous anxiety they face. From all this ... deliver us, Lord!

Having our feet firmly on earth does not in any way stop us from looking up and seeing into the far distance. At the end of this second chapter, Pope Francis quote the bishops of Colombia saying forcefully that despite these situations in which families live today we have every reason to hope, and to transform life through the power of love.

The situations that concern us are challenges. We should not be trapped into wasting our energy in doleful laments, but rather seek new forms of missionary creativity. In every situation that presents itself, “the Church is conscious of the need to offer a word of truth and hope... The great values of marriage and the Christian family correspond to a yearning that is part and parcel of human existence.” If we see any number of problems, these should be, as the Bishops of Colombia have said, a summons to “revive our hope and to make it the source of prophetic visions, transformative actions and creative forms of charity”. (AL57)

The wisdom hidden in the genealogy

There is a reading in the breviary in which St. Augustine sixteen centuries ago chided the faithful of Hippo when they lamented the 'good old days' and complained of the troubles of their own age. Every time has its challenges and its gifts and our time is the best time we have to give the best of ourselves, since it is the only time available to us. But from the past we can learn not to be frightened or discouraged in our day.

Since we have already rewritten the litanies in the preceding paragraphs, we may as well stay on the



same wavelength and take a look at that long litany of names that begins the Gospel of Matthew, which presents the family tree right down to "Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ" (Mt 1:16). It is a concentration of history in the most concise possible form: each generation enclosed in a simple name.

Yet those names say a lot. They reveal dangerous curves, radiant moments but also dark nights among the ancestors of the family of Nazareth, in which God chose to be born and grow.

It is not necessary to browse through the history of each of them. We shall take only two verses, 5 and 6, because they relate to a well-known and particularly important link in this chain, namely David.

"Salmon was the father of Booz by Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed was the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah."

This is a beautiful account of the past of the family of Jesus because it reveals the ups and downs of the family history of each of us. Rahab is the prostitute of Jericho who facilitated the entry of the Israelites into the Promised Land (the second chapter of the book of Joshua). Ruth is a foreigner who migrated to the territory of Israel from Moab, beyond the Dead Sea, because of famine, and she was the grandmother of David. As for Solomon, it is not easy to forget the circumstances of his birth. David fell in love with Bathsheba as he spied on her while she was bathing, and he orchestrates things from bad to worse, even to the killing of Uriah her husband in order to cover up the adultery that he, the king, had committed (2 Samuel, ch. 11).

The Word of God! Certainly. Our history as it is: that is where God came to pitch his tent, to become flesh, so that it becomes the history of salvation.

"Every person is a sacred history". This is one of the great books of Jean Vanier, founder of the L'Arche communities, a man who experienced the suffering of millions of families around the world. Every one of our stories embodies the same mystery of death and resurrection that is in the whole history of mankind, depicted without any omissions in the history from Adam to the marriage of the Lamb with the new Jerusalem, with which the last page of the Bible concludes.

Was the story of Mary from Nazareth to the Cenacle, with the station that has the weight of an endless AMEN under the cross (Stabat Mater!), any less demanding, any less rooted in difficult times? It is heartening to see that the beginning of Jesus' ministry coincides with a family story that starts right from the day of the wedding, and it is Mary, in a country village 14 km from her home, who transformed a critical moment into what happened "in Cana of Galilee, the beginning of the signs performed by Jesus; He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him" (Jn 2:11).

It is equally encouraging to note that the beginnings of the family of the Church, with Mary as mother of John and the others, as related by Luke in the first chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, was not all rosy. We read of persecutions, the fraud of Ananias and Sapphira, the problems associated with the growth of the community, where "the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food." (Acts 6: 1), and the dispersal after the stoning of Stephen ... These were the days of Pentecost, but they were not immune from the strain that we have already seen, with which we are dealing today and which will be part of our pilgrimage in this valley of tears for ever and ever. We listen again to what Pope Francis says:

If we see any number of problems, these should be, as the Bishops of Colombia have said, a summons to "revive our hope and to make it the source of prophetic visions, transformative actions and creative forms of charity". (AL57).

The *kairos* of Marian devotions

KAIROS is one of the most precious words of the Gospel. It is Greek for a favourable moment, the fulfilment of the promises, the 'day of salvation'. We hear it at the reading of the Mass that opens the Lenten journey. But it is the same word that is used to denote spring or autumn. It is the word in New Testament Greek for 'season'.



3 November 1846 was the season or *kairos* for Don Bosco to return to Turin after a long convalescence following the disease that had almost brought him to the grave and from which the prayers of his boys had saved him. He came all the way on foot (33 km) together with his mother, Margaret, whom he has asked to come to act as a mother to his boys.

Margaret was a member of the confraternity of Our Lady of Sorrows in Castelnuovo. The president was the mother of Joseph Cafasso, the holy priest four years older than Don Bosco who guided him in everything. Let's put together the pieces of this mosaic. John Bosco grew up at Becchi learning to pray to Our Lady under the title of **Our Lady of Sorrows**, in the early part of his life, marked by suffering: the death of his father, the poverty that often amounted to misery, having to leave home for three years because of misunderstandings with his brother Anthony. Our Lady, the Mother of sorrows, was the constant presence that gave him strength to continue in that little house at the Becchi. She was the one who taught him to 'make himself humble, strong and robust', in preparation for a future that was to be no less challenging than what he had already experienced in his childhood.

As a teenager at Chieri John learned to trust unreservedly the 'Madonna delle Grazie', **Our Lady of Grace** whom his dear friend Comollo taught him to love. Among the graces he received - and for which we in the whole Salesian Family are immensely grateful to Mary - there was the grace of being able to say yes to his vocation and enter the seminary. It was not something that could be taken for granted for a young man living in Chieri at that time. The '*kairos*' was resolutely determined, according to Don Bosco himself, on the ninth day of the novena to know 'what he should do with his life', the novena that he and Comollo had just made at the altar of Our Lady of Grace in the Cathedral in Chieri.

Here they are now, John and Margaret, arriving on foot at Valdocco. His mother consoled herself jokingly when they entered the Pinardi House and she saw the empty room: "At the Becchi I was busy every day putting things in order, cleaning the furniture and washing the dishes. Here I will be able rest a lot more!" Just ten minutes away from Valdocco there is the Shrine of the Consolata. The first statue of Mary that Don Bosco brought to Valdocco was a *papier maché* statue of Our Lady of Consolation. Mary was the source of all consolation because she was the one who more than any other received the Spirit who is the Consoler. She was the '*Consolata*', the one consoled. Again, there was perfect harmony between the presence of Mary through this devotion and the season of life that Don Bosco was going through. Don Bosco and Mamma Margaret will soon become the family of hundreds of orphans. They will be the source of consolation and comfort for many children who have lost the warmth of a home.



If we allow ourselves to be accompanied by Mary, who knows how to be close to us in the right way at each new stage of life, as only mothers know, every season or *kairos* is perfect and tailor made for us and for those around us. Every season offers us an opportunity to grow in love. And if the form it takes is that of the cross let us not lose courage. Nobody understands the cross better than she does, and no one better than she can make it become the most precious *kairos* of all, where 'there is no greater love'.

Seeds ... to be opened

I will try to take seriously the invitation of Pope Francis not to fall into the trap of wearing myself out moaning in my defence when confronted with contradictions and problems. It is possible to call the difficulties by name, and together they release in us the energy of the hope of translating them into prophetic dreams, and imaginative acts of charity just as he himself is doing in leading the Church.

We are at the time of year when we remember our dead with all the saints. I will try to re-read with the eyes of mercy and praise the story of my family, and revisit my family tree: the roots of the past as far as I can go, and also the ramifications of this in my relationships in the present. All this is sacred history, as is the story of every person.

With gratitude I will retrace the Marian devotions that accompanied the seasons of my life. This could result in an amazing discovery of how Mary was the hand of Providence at every '*kairos*' I have ever experienced. And if I look forward, her presence will undoubtedly become an invitation to liberate the energies of hope in us.

Prayer of Mother Teresa for the family



Heavenly Father, you have given us the model of life in the Holy Family of Nazareth.

Help us, O Loving Father, to make our family another Nazareth where love, peace and joy reign.

May it be deeply contemplative, intensely Eucharistic, revived with joy.

Help us to stay together in joy and sorrow in family prayer.

Teach us to see Jesus in the members of our families, especially in their distressing disguise.

May the Eucharistic heart of Jesus make our hearts humble like his and help us to carry out our family duties in a holy way.

May we love one another as God loves each one of us, more and more each day, and forgive each other's faults as you forgive our sins.

Help us, O Loving Father, to take whatever you give and give whatever you take with a big smile.

Immaculate Heart of Mary, cause of our joy, pray for us.

St Joseph, pray for us. Holy Guardian Angels, be always with us, guide and protect us. Amen.

Prayer of Mother Teresa of Calcutta composed in 1994, World Year of the Family

FAMILY CHRONICLE

The new version of the ADMA website <http://www.admadonbosco.org/> was inaugurated on 12 September 2016.

With more attractive graphics, a different organization of the content and some new sections, it offers visitors more ample opportunities of information, communication and formation.

Thanks to all who contributed to the restructuring of our website.

COACALCO (MEXICO) - YOUTH ADMAI

On 13 and 14 August, the youth group of ADMA of Coacalco Salesian Youth Centre (Mexico) held a retreat on the theme "Mary Help of Christians, Mother of Mercy". It was attended by about 30 young people aged 16-21 from the surrounding villages. They left with great satisfaction and with a resolve to be merciful like Mary, with the sole purpose of coming to Jesus.



The paper can be read at the following site:

www.admadonbosco.org

and here: www.donbosco-torino.it/

For every communication you can contact

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GUARUJA, BRAZIL - NEW ADMA GROUP

On 13 September 2016, Fr Natale Vitali, Councillor for the American Southern Cone Region, welcomed the members of the first group of the Association of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA), in the city of Guaruja.



INDIA - THE SALESIAN FAMILY MEETS THE WORLD DELEGATES

New Delhi - September 2016 - On 15 September, the Delegate of the Rector Major for the Salesian Family, Fr Eusebio Muñoz, the World Delegate of the Salesian Cooperators, Fr Giuseppe Casti, and the World Delegate for the Volunteers of Don Bosco, Fr Joan Lluís Playa, visited the Province of New Delhi (INN), meeting and animating the representatives of the various groups of the Salesian Family in the province.



LUBUMBASHI - CONGO

"In September we had our formation meeting on *Amoris Laetitia*. The members had a discussion on the family in today's world. We decided to share on the exhortation of Pope Francis each month. We encourage young people to discover the joy of family life with Mary Help of Christians. We visit schools and Salesian parishes to spread the devotion to Mary Help of Christians and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. God bless all members of ADMA in the world. We remain united in Mary Help of Christians. (Fr Albert KABUGE).



Missionary Intention

That all the Salesians of Don Bosco may rediscover the joy and responsibility of evangelization

Witness of holiness

Fr Rosario Stroschio, his religious superior, concludes the announcement of the death of the **Servant of God Fr Francesco Convertini** (1898-1976), a missionary in India, by saying: "Those who knew Fr Francesco, always remember with love the advice and exhortations he used to give in confession. His voice was very weak and yet full of ardour: "Let us love souls, let us work only for souls ... Let us draw close to the people ... Let us deal with them in such a way that the people will know that we love them...." His whole life was a wonderful testimony of a fruitful priestly ministry and missionary work. We can summarize it in a simple expression: "To win souls for Christ there is no more powerful way than that of goodness and love! ""

