

MARY IS WITH US AND GUIDES US ON THE PATH OF SALVATION

The 150th year since the foundation of ADMA was truly a time of grace for our Association. During the year we felt the motherly presence of Mary. She accompanies us, strengthening our faith in Jesus her Son so that we can experience the love of God for each one of us.

The human heart is made for God and deeply desires peace and love. Unfortunately, peace is decreasing on earth: conflicts are growing, the hearts of men and women often grow hard and cold. Hatred and violence mark the lives of many people and many nations. Many do not know the love of God and are far from him; many are spiritually ill and heading towards spiritual death. We easily forget Jesus Christ, his words and his love. Consequently, faith is extinguished in many souls and the heart is taken up with the material things of the world.

With motherly concern, Mary is with us and guides us so that we do not lose the way of salvation. Thanks to her also there are those in our day who believe and love, those who try to get closer and closer to Jesus, who seek him tirelessly. They are the humble and the meek who, with the pain and suffering they bear in silence, with their hope and above all with their faith, are apostles of love. Jesus brought light into this world. He brought it for those who want to see it and receive it. It is the light of truth, peace and love. Mary guides us maternally to adore Jesus, to love him as she did, so that our thoughts, words and works are directed to her Son in accordance with his will.

The Strenna of this year 2020, "Good Christians and honest citizens", reflects the Gospel verse: "Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven". It reminds us of the many different ways Don Bosco sought to form young people capable of being the leaven of a fairer and more human world. There are many ways in which we are called to be good Christians: good Christians in daily life illuminated by faith, in careful discernment, in apostolic zeal for evangelization, in an authentically Salesian spirituality, in the missions *ad gentes*, in a courageous reaching out to those on the margins, going out from our comfort zones ...

In the same way, there are priorities and criteria for living as honest citizens in the world: giving witness to young people of justice, solidarity, protection of the most vulnerable, educating young people to active and responsible citizenship and to service in politics, rooting out every form of corruption in our own lives, showing concern for migrants and people who are forced to move, caring for the common home, showing practical respect for Human Rights ... This is faith that is incarnated in time and history.

May Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco, our father and founder whom we remember in a special way this January, help us to grow as good Christians and honest citizens



Formative Journey 2019-2020
 Anchored to the two columns: Jesus the Eucharist and Mary Immaculate-Helper

Luis Fernando Álvarez González, sdb

4. The Bread of the Word



That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. (Lk 24,13-16; 25-27).

The Second Vatican Council attributes the utmost importance to the Word. (SC 24), It observes, in a very bold assertion, that the Church has always venerated the Holy Scriptures as the Body of the Lord himself (DV 21). We are very grateful to the Council which has opened the great treasure of the Word of God to all simple and humble people, heard in their native tongue.

God brings us together to open his heart and speak to ours

We have already said that every celebration is a meeting. Etymologically the word 'Church' means 'assembly', the people assembled to listen to the Word. This is its primary essence. "The Church, listening to the Word of God, celebrates the mystery of Christ, for the salvation of the world". God himself gathers us to speak to our heart and enter into dialogue with us. God uses our human words to tell us clearly how much he loves us, how we can be truly happy, what plans he has for a better and more human world, how he has realized his plans in Jesus Christ and, above all, what he wants in particular from each of us and from all of us together as a Church.

The Word became man and pitched his tent among us

God our Father has never stopped talking to his people. "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us through the Son," (Heb. 1,1). The prologue of the Gospel of Saint John says this in a remarkable way. In fact, when the fullness of time came, hope came true. Jesus, the living Word of the Father, became one of us and set up his tent among men and women, never to abandon us again: "And behold, I am with you always until the end of the world" (Mt 28 , 20).

Thinking about these words of the Risen Lord, the liturgy has developed the beautiful rite of the procession with the Book of the Gospels towards the ambo, for the proclamation of the Gospel. With this procession, the assembly welcomes the risen Christ who comes personally to speak and announce the Good News. In reality, as St Augustine says, "the Gospel is the mouth of Christ. He is seated in heaven, but he does not stop speaking on earth."

Does the Word of God change your life and your heart?

The Word of God in the celebration of the Eucharist

From the Word of God contained in the Scriptures, the Eucharist takes the elements of the liturgy of the Word, which allow us to listen and to respond to God and to initiate a fruitful dialogue with him. They are as follows:

- a) The *scripture readings* contained in the lectionary and in the Book of the Gospels.
- b) The *homily*, the importance of which lies in accepting the Word as the good seed and applying it to one's life and one's situation after the example of Mary, the first disciple of the Lord.
- c) The *responsorial psalm*, a song that gives an incomparable lyrical and poetic tone to the proclamation of the Word.
- d) *Silence* which is essential and necessary. It favours and supports personal dialogue with the Lord and meditation on the Word, so that it can bear abundant fruit in our daily lives. The Word is always born from silence.
- e) *The prayer of the faithful*, which asks for the needs of the world and of the most disadvantaged, and for the Church. Dialogue is essential in every interpersonal meeting. The proclamation of the Word from on high at the ambo signifies that God takes the initiative. The acclamations, the silence, the song and the profession of faith are the prayerful response of the assembly and prepare us for adoration. This is how the Holy Spirit guides and directs our prayer in the liturgy of the Word. Listening to the Word, therefore, is already praying!

The **rich and attractive fruits** of this dialogue between God and the members of the assembly are conversion and faith; fuller adherence to the will of the Father; the following of Christ and docility to the Holy Spirit. This explains why the liturgy of the Word requires a long serious space of time, with periods of silence, so that the Word given by the Father in the Son may bear fruit in us and return again to the Father through the Liturgy for Christ, with Christ and in Christ, the Incarnate word.

What part do listening, silence, and dialogue play in your life?

Things that favour a liturgy of the living Word

This also explains why we try to ensure a dignified proclamation of the readings with all respect and attention, so that the whole assembly can welcome the gift of the Word of Eternal Life. This is how the "anamnesis" (a memory that makes present what is remembered) of the wonders of God brought to fullness in Christ is realized. It gradually turns into sincere thanksgiving and praise of God. Without "anamnesis" there can be no celebration because there is nothing to remember. And without a good proclamation there is no "anamnesis".

Participation in the liturgy of the Word requires:

- a) The sign of *the ambo*, which together with the altar and the celebrant's chair constitutes the centre of the liturgical space of the Eucharist. It is fitting that the ambo should have appropriate decoration and a noble beauty, which clearly indicates the importance of the divine Word.
- b) The dignity and beauty of *the books of the Word of God* (the lectionary and the book of the Gospel). The Church has always maintained the same veneration towards the Word of God as to the Body of the Lord.
- c) The proclamation of the Word, heard and understood, entrusted as a treasure to the responsibility of the readers. The Word of God must always be read as the letter of a child or a spouse. If the readings are not proclaimed well, the Word is not listened to and so there is no dialogue between God and his People.
- d) Suitable comment, brief, eloquent, and full of spirit, leading to a spiritual, noble and faithful acceptance of the Word.

The Word of God is not only read, it is celebrated!

To say that the Word of God is celebrated means that God does what he says. What is accomplished in the Eucharist is what the Word announces. Word and celebration are a single act of worship (SC 56), because they reproduce the same union between deeds and words that exists in the history of salvation; and because they remember the mystery of Christ and make it present.



From the letter of the Rector Major for the 150th anniversary of ADMA: "Trust, confide and smile"

Mary, teacher of wisdom

In his dream at the age of nine, Mary introduced herself to Don Bosco as a teacher of wisdom. Luke the evangelist describes Mary as a wise woman who keeps and meditates everything in her heart. Biblical wisdom, in fact, is characterized precisely by the ability to listen to the Word of God that is heard in everyday life. Mary is a prophet, because she has a heart that listens. She is able to learn from reality and to recognize in it the signs of God's intervention and his salvation. In Don Bosco's Marian dreams, **Mary often appears as a woman of the people**: practical, active, and wise with the wisdom that comes from the experience of life. Mary teaches Don Bosco starting from experience and in the light of experience. She avoids abstractions and stimulates the intelligence of her disciple. In this respect, the influence of Mamma Margherita on Don Bosco's understanding of Mary is evident. Like Mamma Margherita, the "devotees" of Mary Help of Christians must be prophets by their lives, with their docility to let themselves be challenged by events, to treasure experience, and to let themselves be led step by step by the Spirit. They are prophets first of all because they are witnesses, then because - as educators - they are capable of accompanying others on the journey of life.

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Eighth International Congress of Mary Help of Christians: *With Mary, the Woman who Believes*

The Congress focussed on listening to the Word. It highlighted the fact that faith in Jesus is transmitted from person to person and from generation to generation, narrating the wonders done by God. In all this Mary is close to us. She is the one who welcomed Jesus in her virginal womb and for this reason she is mother, teacher and guide of the faith, especially in the accompaniment of the younger generations on their way to holiness.

Conclusion

As we give thanks for these 150 years of the life of the Association of Mary Help of Christians, let us commit ourselves, faithful to the charism of the holy founder of the Salesian Family, to let ourselves be guided by the Holy Spirit for a **renewed evangelizing and educational drive**. It is a question of bringing faith in Jesus Christ and love of Mary to all young people, boys, girls, teenagers, especially the poorest and most needy. Let's never forget it! It is a matter of **sowing** this sensitivity already in their early years when boys and girls are in their golden age of fascination for religious values. It is a question of **sharing** this faith in Jesus and love for our Mother with many friends, family members, colleagues, neighbours and acquaintances. The essence of this evangelizing drive consists in **renewing** the Association with special attention to the family and the newer generations, fostering and taking care of personal friendship, openness to all and the spirit of service. This means making our own the deeply evangelical attitudes of Mary: her availability to God, her fidelity in the hour of trial and the cross, and her spirit of joy and thanksgiving for the wonders that the Lord works.

Authentic entrustment to Mary, the first to be evangelized and the first evangelizer, is for us a charismatic reality that enables us to be aware that we are servants and mediators of the grace of God. Mary, **star of evangelization**, helps us, as she did at Cana of Galilee, to see the real questions of the young people and of the people whom God loves, and she invites us to listen to her Son: "Do whatever he tells you."



FAMILY CHRONICLE

L'AQUILA (ITALY)

Everyone knows the history of the city of L'Aquila and the earthquake of 6 April 2009 which caused over 300 deaths, 1,600 injured and thousands of displaced people in the city of Abruzzo and in dozens of neighbouring areas. People still talk about it even today after more than 10 years because the wounds are still open, but little is said about what has been done to rise again.

On 24 May 2017 an ADMA group was formed in L'Aquila. About twenty people joined the Association, pledging to participate in the liturgical life of the Church, to practise and promote devotion to Mary Help of Christians, to cultivate a welcoming Christian environment, and to collaborate in Don Bosco's mission. Staying together has become a necessity for us. Praying together we find peace for our souls. Celebrating together is our way of rejoicing in the gift of life. This is also our way of volunteering, of being present and making ourselves useful in the centre where we meet.

More than two years have passed since the foundation. We now have 27 members. We are not many, but we are very united. We have set ourselves as our main purpose to be available to the house for any need. There are some who offer their technical knowledge for manual jobs, some who collaborate with the Rector in the formation of young people, some who take turns during the summer weeks giving a hand in secretarial and administrative work, others who come simply to pray. It is lovely for us to meet on the 24th of each month for the recitation of the Rosary, or once a month for our formation course, or on the numerous occasions of celebration, and to meet on Sunday for Mass.

We want to imitate the family style of loving kindness, celebration, sharing in the Salesian charism. Every Saturday we take turns in the oratory, depending on family and work commitments. We meet in the kitchen of what



we call the "yellow house", to prepare a simple lunch for approximately 45 young people of middle school and high school who are following the leadership training course. And we are also there to earn their confidence and listen to their fears, to become like parents to them, and to be thanked with a hug. They are our wealth. They are the young people who attend the oratory, some of them children of ADMA members and some who come from other neighbourhoods, who have chosen to come for their Christian formation and to share their youth with other young people in this environment.

COACALCO (MEXICO) - PILGRIMAGE TO THE BASILICA OF GUADALUPE

On 4 December 2019, in preparation for the feast of the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe, which is celebrated in Mexico on 9 December, the Laura Vicuña ADMA group from Coacalco visited the Marian shrine.

The pilgrimage was intended to entrust our activities to the Blessed Mother, as well as to formalize the admission of 16 aspirants who will be officially admitted to the association next year at the end of their formation. This pilgrimage was full of joy and emotion from the aspirants who expressed their desire to get to know and love

the Blessed Virgin.

The pilgrimage group was made up of 21 members and 16 aspirants together with the spiritual animator of the group Sister Guadalupe González Camarena, FMA.

They went on pilgrimage as a community to various significant places such as the Cerrito chapel, where the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe appeared to San Juan Diego, the gardens in his honour and the adjacent chapels. The pilgrimage ended with Holy Mass.



ADMA FOUNDATION IN BETAFO / ANTSIRABE (MADAGASCAR)

Devotion to Our Lady is widespread in Madagascar. The Immaculate Virgin is the principal patroness of Madagascar. Since their arrival in 1981, the Salesians have spread devotion to the Help of Christians. **The first ADMA Group was started in Betafo / Antsirabe on 7 December 2019.**

After a previous three-year preparation, led by Sister Nunziatina Lo Bartolo, a group of devotees felt ready to make their commitment to the Association. During the Eucharistic celebration, presided over by the Salesian Bishop Rosario Vella, the first group of 23 members expressed their willingness to love Our Lady with filial love, to be apostles of devotion to the Virgin Help of Christians and to work for the education of young people according to the charism of Don Bosco. A Rosary was given to each of the members of the Association.

The Salesian Family in Betafo is enriched by many Groups that live the charism of Don Bosco: Salesians, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco Volunteers, Salesian Cooperators, Past Pupils, CMB (Missionary Community of Don Bosco) and ADMA.





PRIMARY ADMA - PILGRIMAGE TO MEDJUGORJE

A group of ADMA families from Turin, accompanied by Fr Pierluigi Cameroni, spent the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020 in a strong experience of faith and fraternity in Medjugorje. Through the climb to the Apparition Hill and to the Mount of the Cross, joining the various parish celebrations, a visit to various communities dedicated to situations of poverty, and a meeting with the visionary Marja Pavlovic Lunetti, the participants shared intense days of spirituality and renewal in faith.

It was also an opportunity for ADMA to thank God for the gifts received during the celebration of the 150th anniversary of its foundation in 2019.

The participation of about 20 children accompanied by their parents confirmed the value of a shared journey of faith as a family and showed how the little ones are truly bearers of great spiritual resources.

The faith in Jesus Christ and the love of Mary Queen of Peace displayed by many pilgrims from many parts of the world served to renew our Christian commitment and entrustment to Mary Help of Christians.