

# MONTHLY MESSAGE

n. 10 – 2020

Turin - Valdocco 24 October



## GREETINGS FROM THE NEW WORLD SPIRITUAL ANIMATOR OF ADMA

A cordial greeting to all.



First of all, I hope that all of you are well, your family, your friends and your loved ones. I am close to you all in prayer and ready and willing to offer support. *Mary Help of Christians protects us and we entrust ourselves to her.*

I would like to take advantage of this new October issue of the ADMA online newsletter to introduce myself. The handover from Fr Pierluigi Cameroni to me took place at the Marian Day held in Valdocco on 20 September. It was a family celebration, serene, simple and meaningful. My name is Alejandro Guevara Rodriguez, I am a Salesian priest and for just one month I have been living in the Salesian Community of Mary Help of Christians in Valdocco, Turin.

My parents are called Alejandro and Francisca. I have two younger brothers, both teachers: one of English and the other of mathematics. Their names are Guillermo and Francisco de Borja, the latter is married and has one daughter, my niece Julia. I was born in Badajoz in 1973 and lived there with my family until I was 18 when I started my Salesian formative journey. My family expands to uncles, cousins, nephews and nieces because we have always been very close to each other and we have shared the important steps in each other's lives. I thank God for my family.

I began my Salesian journey in the pre-novitiate in Cadiz (1991). I did my novitiate in Sanlúcar la Mayor (Seville) and made my first profession on 16 August 1993. I then did my post-novitiate in Granada and practical training in Cadiz. I started studying theology in Seville and in 2001-2002 I was sent to the Salesian Pontifical University (UPS) to complete my theology studies. On 8 June 2002 I was ordained priest in Seville and in the academic year 2002-2003 I obtained a licentiate in Education from UPS.

I returned to the *María Auxiliadora* Province in Seville where I was assistant to the aspirants and pre-novices for 5 years. The Provincial then appointed me Pastoral Coordinator of the Salesian House in Granada SJB, a position I held for three years. I then spent a year in Genzano preparing to become novice master in Spain and the following year I became director of the post-novices. In 2014, with the unification of the Spanish provinces, the new Provincial, now Cardinal López, asked me to continue in the Provincial Council as Provincial Delegate for the Salesian Family. This marked a new stage in my Salesian life. I continued in that role in the houses of Seville and Córdoba until last June.

In January 2020, the Rector Major invited me to come to Valdocco as the new Spiritual Animator of the Primary ADMA, and Delegate for the Association of Mary Help of Christians worldwide. After a few weeks of prayer and discernment, with the help of my family, of my Salesian confreres and of friends who know me well, I answered the Rector Major placing myself at his disposal for the service requested. My appointment was made public on 5 June and since then I have been learning more about the new situation I am in and the new service I have to perform.

In summary, my Salesian life has developed over many years in the houses of formation: pre-novitiate, novitiate and post-novitiate. I had pastoral experience in a Salesian house and since 2014 I have been working with Salesians and laity in the area of the Salesian Family. I am very grateful to the Salesian Congregation for the opportunities it has offered me and for the services it has requested of me, because they have helped me to grow as a person, as a Salesian and as a priest.

I wish to take advantage of these, the first words I address to all of you, to thank my predecessor Fr Pierluigi Cameroni for the work he has done with generosity, enthusiasm and wisdom, accompanying and renewing the Primary ADMA of Valdocco. He has also encouraged, spread and propagated devotion to Mary Help of Christians throughout the world. I am very grateful to him. "The lot marked out for me is my delight: welcome indeed the heritage that falls to me" (Ps 16: 6). Thanks Don Pierluigi! God bless you and may our Mother Help of Christians continue to protect you. Finally, I would like to put myself at the service of all of you, spiritual animators, local councils, associates, devotees and children of Mary Help of Christians. We have a Mother who loves us, takes care of us, protects us and we, as good children, entrust ourselves to her. I ask you to pray for me, so that I can carry out this service alongside you and together with you. We want to live in filial entrustment to Mary as our father Don Bosco invited us to live.



*Alejandro Guevara Rodríguez, SDB.  
Spiritual Animator of ADMA*



## ADMA formation programme 2020-2021

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

### 2. Return to the footsteps of Don Bosco

The Message sent by Pope Francis to the 28th General Chapter of the Salesians comes from his heart as a pastor. It is evident, at first reading, that it is not formal and cold. Everything savours of the familiarity typical of the Salesian charism. There is nothing generic. Everything is in tune with our charism. In his Message to GC 28 the Pope expresses his pastoral style in all its fullness: his concern for the young, especially for the poorest. This message was already stated in the Synod on young people. From October 2016, when the theme of the Synod was made public ("Young people, faith and vocational discernment") until 25 March 2019 (when the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* was signed) the universal Church tried to take the world of youth seriously in the light of the Gospel and of the changed times in which we are living. It was a "Salesian Synod", because the whole Church was concerned with what is dear to us more than anything else: young people!



The basic theme running through the Message to GC 28 is the invitation, first of all to the Salesian Congregation but also to us in ADMA and to the whole Salesian Family, to make a real "Valdocco Option". It is immediately obvious that this is the dominant topic of the whole text, stated in various ways. Valdocco is the "Mother House", and the place where the charism was born and developed. It is precisely a mother house, where the Salesian spirit took shape. But it is not just about romantic memories or a convenient choice. Pope Francis wanted us to return to Valdocco because it is the source of our char-

ism. We know that if we want to tap into the purity of water we have to go to the source, where the water flows clear and crystalline from the rock. This is exactly what happens, symbolically, in Valdocco! We return to the source where the charism is to be found in its fulness and in all its purity. Valdocco, therefore, is for us, sons and daughters of Don Bosco, a gift and a challenge.

The "Valdocco Option" is not only the contemplation of a past history, but strength to face the present life of the world, of the Church and of the Salesian Family. It means trying to understand how to make concrete today the style of action that characterized Don Bosco from his very core and that found its first and paradigmatic realization in Valdocco.

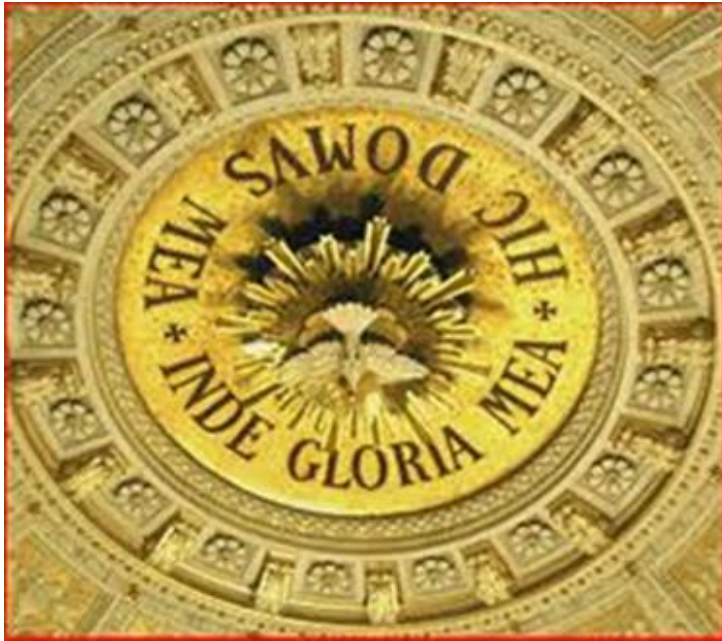
Nobody sees a return to Valdocco as a return to the past. We go back to Valdocco with the intention of seeking the right inspiration to face the challenges of today and to prepare the future of the charism. We are convinced that the times we live in are neither better nor worse than the times Don Bosco experienced but simply different. The invitation to make the "Valdocco Option" our own means meeting with Don Bosco to live the charism today. We take from our holy founder the fundamental principles, his particular style, his unique insights and his way of acting. Pope Francis invites us "to remain in creative fidelity to our Salesian identity" in our own context.

"The Association of Mary Help of Christians is vitally linked with the Sanctuary at Turin-Valdocco. It can be said that Mary not only intervened directly in its construction, according to the words of Don Bosco, but from there she has extended her patronage to all the world. This is why the Association is called upon to remain united with this holy place". (ADMA Regulations art. 9). Because of the founding charism there is a real link between ADMA and the shrine of Mary Help of Christians, the centre of communion and source of grace. The link between ADMA and the Shrine is original and essential. In this line, we understand how the historical headquarters of the Primary ADMA is in Turin and its task is to take care of and make visible this spiritual and historical link of the Association with the shrine of Mary Help of Christians. The establishment of this Association in Valdocco is a separate initiative but closely linked to the construction of the temple in honour of Mary Help of Christians in Valdocco and to the extraordinary graces that the Virgin bestowed in it. Don Eugenio Ceria, historian of Don Bosco, said that the erection of the temple of Mary Help of Christians in Valdocco has an exceptional importance in the tradition of the Salesian Family: it guarantees with certainty the maternal intervention of the Help of Christians ("Mary built this house"). It is established as the "privileged place" of a spiritual and apostolic message (heart of the spiritual patrimony of the Founder) and becomes the centre of cohesion and of its worldwide expansion. ("Here is my house, from here my glory [goes forth]"). With this temple, says Ceria, Don Bosco, has kindled "a mystical fire, in which generations of evangelical workers will be warmed up and have their strength restored, to be sent to work in the Lord's vineyard." (E. Ceria, 'Annali' Vol. I page. 89; cf. all chap. 9).

In a letter to members of ADMA on 24 July 1989, Fr Egidio Viganò stated: "Thinkers of the faith speak of a 'theology of the temple' as a special place of presence of the sacred with strong spiritual and apostolic projections. The Shrine at Valdocco transcends the local geography and is a fruitful centre that extends to the world the riches of a charism of the Holy Spirit preserved and animated by the concern of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God".

And in a masterly letter written on the same day to the Rector of the Basilica in Valdocco, Fr Viganò developed the theme of the "theology of the temple" and of Valdocco as a charismatic centre for the whole Salesian Family.

### The Basilica of Valdocco centre of cohesion and source of grace



The famous expression "Hic domus mea, inde gloria mea" (here is my house, from here my glory [goes forth]) has a theological and historical meaning that is significant for the vitality of the Salesian charism in the world. It is appropriate here to refer to a "theology of the temple", as a geographically embodied expression of a special presence of God, of his gratuitous initiatives, of a sacred place with maternal interventions by Mary or with the intercession of certain Saints. Let us turn our gaze to many shrines throughout the world, especially those built in honour of the Virgin Mary.

We must deepen this type of theological reflection in reference to the shrine of the Help of Christians in Valdocco, which prodigiously proclaims Mary's help in the birth and spread of our charism. Don Bosco assures us that the construc-

tion of this temple, consecrated on 9 June 1868 ("day of paradise"), was suggested to him from above (cf. MB 2, 241 ff). He was able to complete it in just three years thanks to the continuous and miraculous intervention of Mary. "Do you see this church?" - he used to say- "Mary contributed to it in a marvellous way and built it, I would say, by dint of miracles ... Nor did Mary's favours cease when the building was completed; indeed, they continued more than before. These are things that make us cry with tenderness". (MB 16, 285).

With good reason Don Ceria writes: "This Church of Mary Help of Christians is truly miraculous: miraculous, for having been shown to the Saint long beforehand in both its location and its design, miraculous in its erection, because Don Bosco, a poor man and father of the poor, had only providence to enable him to build it. It is miraculous for the river of graces that never ceased to flow from it as from an inexhaustible source". (E. Ceria, "Annali" Vol.1, p. 92; it is worth reading the whole of chapter 9).

Our Father Don Bosco speaks of this "Marian house" as "a living presence, a fountain overflowing with grace, a continuous relaunch of apostolic activity, an atmosphere of hope and an expression of loyalty to the Church and the Pope. A true "lyric of facts" is presented for our consideration. I think we should reflect more on the "spiritual" consequences that the construction of this temple had for Don Bosco (and for us), its effective meaning and its function in the definitive configuration of his charism and the concrete consequences of the foundation. and development of the Salesian Family." (Circular Letter: Mary renews the Salesian Family of Don Bosco, AGC 289, p. 19-20).

The building of the basilica in Valdocco is an event that had a particular impact on the long and difficult work of our Father's founding of the Salesian Family. It is not simply the material construction of a church (like others that he himself built), but a charismatic fact of an intense experience of faith that helped to define his personality as a Founder. During these three years of hard work Don Bosco led a profound interior life with deep trust in Mary. He learned to consider the maternal presence of Mary as the clearest confirmation that his work was willed by the Lord: "Mary did everything. She is the mother and support of our Family. We cannot go wrong because she it is who guides us. In this church there is not a single brick that is not marked by some grace. The expansion of the Salesian Family must be acknowledged as her work. She is the Foundress and will be the Support of our works, our Teacher and Guide. Only in heaven will we know to our amazement what she has done. She loves us too much: Mother, Mother!" (cf. Biog. Mem. passim). Mother Mazzarello rightly said: "If Don Bosco speaks like this, it is Our Lady who has spoken with him!" This temple has become for Don Bosco the centre of cohesion of his

works, the source of graces, and his Marian shrine for the world.

The Association of Mary Help of Christians is vitally linked to this temple: it can be said that Mary not only intervened in its construction, but that she never abandoned it thereafter. This is why the Association, which has branched out everywhere, is called to keep united to this sacred place so many "faithful [devotees] eager to participate more abundantly in the abundance of spiritual benefits, of which this place is the perennial source" (E. Ceria, "Annali" Vol I, p. 91).

*For personal reflection*

- Pope Francis speaks of the "Valdocco Option". Do you know Valdocco: the history of Valdocco and its significance for the birth of the Salesian spirit? Have you ever visited Valdocco?
- ADMA was born in Valdocco: a knowledge of Valdocco is important if we are to know where we were born and know our roots. Do you know the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, its significance for Don Bosco and for the Salesian Family?

*For prayer*

- Remember our charismatic roots (Dt 8,2-10).

*Remember the long road by which Yahweh your God led you for forty years in the desert, to humble you, to test you and know your inmost heart -- whether you would keep his commandments or not. He humbled you, he made you feel hunger, he fed you with manna which neither you nor your ancestors had ever known, to make you understand that human beings live not on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of Yahweh. The clothes on your back did not wear out and your feet were not swollen, all those forty years. Learn from this that Yahweh your God was training you as a man trains his child, and keep the commandments of Yahweh your God, and so follow his ways and fear him. But Yahweh your God is bringing you into a fine country, a land of streams and springs, of waters that well up from the deep in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines, of figs, of pomegranates, a land of olives, of oil, of honey, a land where you will eat bread without stint, where you will want nothing, a land where the stones are iron and where the hills may be quarried for copper. You will eat and have all you want and you will bless Yahweh your God in the fine country which he has given you.*

*In your life:*

Pay a visit, real or virtual, to Valdocco (<https://basilicamariaausiliatrice.it/>)

Become familiar with the ADMA website (<https://www.admadonbosco.org/>)

The paper can be read at the following site:

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

For every communication you can contact

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

## FAMILY CHRONICLE

### Italy - XXX Marian Day of ADMA

"Dream and make people dream". This is the motto of ADMA's XXX Marian Day held in Turin on Sunday 20 September with about 400 participants including adults and young people. A somewhat special day, because it was marked by the handover of the animation of the Association from Fr Pierluigi Cameroni to Fr Alejandro Guevara. An atmosphere of celebration and gratitude marked the event, with moments of participation and emotion, such as the delivery of a beautiful photo album and Marian stoles. Renato Valera, President of ADMA, coordinated the day, underlining how Mary Help of Christians always accompanies the Association.



Fr Cameroni retraced the journey of almost 14 years, describing what animating ADMA meant for him, looking at Don Bosco, apostle of the Help of Christians and founder of the Association: "The Association grows and matures to the extent that each member feels the call to respond to a grace received, to 'give back' or rather to share and spread the grace experienced, because faith is strengthened by giving it: this translates into a living and dynamic presence in one's family, in the workplace, in participating in the formative and prayer life of the Association, in dedicating time and energy to ADMA... Our Lady has always guided us in these years, she has inspired us in many circumstances without being too tied and bound to projects and programs. Christian life, like education, is like a river that should not be reined in too much, but left free in its path: accompanied, not forced or constrained ... One of the realities that most helped me to grow spiritually was the great ability to share life and faith especially during retreats and spiritual exercises. Communion in God creates very strong bonds between people and strengthens the believing experience and the vocational identity of each."

Fr Alejandro Guevara shared his life story and how he arrived at this mission entrusted to him by the Rector Major. Fr Roberto Carelli presented the formative journey of the year 2020-2021 entitled "Dream and make dream", inspired by the slogan of Pope Francis addressed to the Salesians at the conclusion of the General Chapter: "Don Bosco dreamed and made people dream. But his dreams were not an escape from reality, on the contrary, an immersion in reality, and they did not have to do with sleep and inertia, but with vigilance and works, not with purely human genius and resourcefulness, but with the inspirations and fruitfulness of God. The invitation to dream and to make people dream urges us to take care of formation, that of young people as well as that of adults, because it encourages us not to stop at facts, not to drown in occupations and concerns, and asks us to place ourselves, according to the spirit of Don Bosco, in the perspective of God, in the perspective of grace, faith, vocation and mission, praise and service of God, of a contemplative and non-operative life not closed in on itself but dedicated to others, especially if they are poorer."

In the afternoon, in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, there was the participatory Eucharistic celebration presided over by Fr Leonardo Mancini, provincial of Piedmont-Valle d'Aosta, during which 6 aspirants shared the joy and grace of joining ADMA and of the Salesian Family. A day of grace with many gifts and reasons to pray, to give thanks, to entrust and to continue dreaming!

