

MARY, STAR OF HOPE



Dear friends, a cordial greeting to all and our best wishes to you and to all devotees of Mary Help of Christians throughout the world. May Jesus, newly born and made man, be joy and good news for all during the New Year we are beginning!

A few weeks ago, our dear Rector Major, Fr Angel Fernandez, faithful to his annual practice, gave us the Strenna for 2021 entitled "*Moved by hope, I make all things new*" (Rev 21: 5). We invite you to read it, meditate on it and to bring it to life in your local situation. In the last part, the Strenna speaks to us of Mary of Nazareth, Mother of God and gateway of hope. It is precisely on the basis of this reflection that we offer you some ideas for living this Salesian month.

Today more than ever, Mary appears to us as a light that guides us in the darkness of life's journey, like a beacon that indicates the way to a safe harbour, like a torch that shines in the deepest recesses, like a candle of hope that cannot be extinguished in the face of the impetuous winds that threaten it. In short, she is a star of hope in our life.

This could be seen on many occasions **in Don Bosco's life**. Think of the time in 1844 when he found himself in a difficult situation. He had left the refuge of the Marchesa di Barolo and had no place to bring his boys. Nothing was certain for Don Bosco. The oratory was now an itinerant oratory in the outskirts of Turin and the young people had no roof to shelter them. Don Bosco dreamt of **Mary, in the guise of a shepherdess**, as she accompanied him and a herd of wild animals to Valdocco, the future home of the oratory. We know that at the end of the dream, when she saw the tears in his eyes, the young shepherdess told him that he would understand everything in due course.

Or later in 1847, when Don Bosco recounted **the dream of the rose pergola** that spoke of the young people who wanted to follow him on the path that the Lord had traced for him: the service of young people, especially the poorest and most abandoned. Mary's presence was fundamental in this dream. It was the Queen of Heaven who led Don Bosco into the enchanted garden: the Salesian mission. It was the Blessed Virgin who provided him with a pair of strong shoes to continue the journey and helped him to understand the dream. She was the star who supported him in his moment of fatigue.

Mary was an inseparable companion in Don Bosco's life. We know of other dreams and moments in Don Bosco's life when Mary appeared as a sign of hope in times of difficulty.

The same was true **at the birth of the Christian community**. Without doubt, in the days after the death of the Lord Jesus, the first disciples had their moments of great uncertainty, of doubt and darkness.

It is right here, when hopes have vanished and illusions have disappeared, when sadness weighs on us and discouragement does not allow us to see beyond present difficulties, that she becomes a star for all of us. She transforms silence into a profound and cordial **prayer** to the Father. Mary transforms her poignant pain at the cruel death of her Son into universal motherhood for all of us. Mary **abandons** herself in absolute and full trust in the plan of salvation. She knows that death and failure don't have the last word. Mary **hopes** against all hope.

Above all, Mary prays, obeys, and trusts. And in this way, **she loves and hopes**. "Prayer opens the door to hope. There is hope but I open the door with my prayer. Because people of prayer safeguard basic truths; they are the ones who repeat, first and foremost to themselves and then to all the others, that this life, despite all its toils and trials, despite its difficult days, is full of a grace that is awe inspiring. And as such it must always be defended and protected... Men and women of prayer bear gleaming reflections of light on their faces: because the sun does not stop illuminating them, even in the darkest of days." (Pope Francis General Audience of 20 May 2020).

This is our Mother's way of hope. In this way, she becomes **a teacher of hope for each of us**. She shows us the steps to take if we are to be bearers of true hope for others. "*We are all bearers of joy. Have you considered this? That you are bearers of joy? Or do you prefer to bring bad news, things that sadden? We are capable of bearing joy. This life is the gift that God gave us: and it is too short to consume it in sadness.*" (Pope Francis General Audience of 20 May 2020)

The cross, the pain, the death and the loss of her Son ... did not paralyze Mary but she did not reject the pain, nor deny the cross. She transformed them with the power of love. And it is precisely this love that leads her to set out and to go towards the Light, to meet the One who is Hope for all. Jesus is our hope and Mary leads us to him.

Dear friends, let us live side by side with Mary, the star of Hope, in this Salesian month that lies before us and let us live with joy.

Renato Valera, President ADMA Valdocco
Alejandro Guevara, Spiritual Animatore ADMA Valdocco.

ADMA formation programme 2020-2021

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

4. THE ART OF DISCERNMENT

The art of discernment has its roots in a "twofold **docility**: docility to the young and their needs and docility to the Spirit and to everything He wishes to transform" (*Message to GC28*). We are called to learn as soon as possible how to discern and the best way to discern. First of all, we must not lose contact with young people. The **grace of Valdocco** makes it "the place of memory where the founding dream came true and took its first steps. I am sure that the noise and clamour of the oratories will be the best and most effective music for the Spirit to rekindle the charismatic gift of your founder. Do not shut the windows to this background noise ... Let it accompany you and keep you restless and fearless in your discernment; and let these voices and these songs, in turn, evoke in you the faces of many other young people who, for various reasons, find themselves like sheep without a shepherd (cf. Mk 6:34). This clamour and restlessness will keep you awake and alert to any kind of self-imposed anaesthesia and will help you to remain in creative fidelity to your Salesian identity" (*Message to GC28*).



Pope Francis has repeatedly affirmed that at this time of "change of epoch" the **gift of discernment** is something that must become the patrimony of all the components of society and of the Church - but for us to be Salesians capable of a profound look at the changes taking place, our discernment invites us, first and foremost, "to cultivate a contemplative attitude, one that is able to identify and discern the focal points. This will help you to enter into the journey with the spirit and the contribution of Don Bosco's sons and, like him, to develop a "bold cultural revolution" (*Laudato si'*, no. 114). This contemplative attitude will allow you to surpass and exceed your own expectations and plans. We are men and women of faith, which presupposes that we are passionate about Jesus Christ; and we know that both our present and our future are imbued with this apostolic and charismatic force called to continue to permeate the lives of so many young people abandoned and at risk, poor and needy, excluded and discarded, deprived of rights, deprived of a home ... These young people await a gaze of hope capable of contradicting any kind of fatalism or determinism. They are waiting to encounter the gaze of Jesus who tells them "that in all the dark and painful situations ... there is a way out" (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus vivit*, 104). That is where our joy dwells" (*Message to GC28*).

Discernment comes from **contemplation**. Why? Because it is that spiritual gaze animated by the Holy Spirit, that helps us to recognize the presence and action of God in human history. It is a gaze that starts from reality and finds there the action of the Spirit in the works and wounds of humanity. What are the appeals that come to us from God starting from the situation of today's youth? What is God asking of us through the voice of the young, especially the poorest? In what way are we responding to the challenges that come to us from our time? These are the opening questions that can initiate an authentic discernment, which always starts from that capacity to recognize what is happening in history through the eyes of the Father, with the sentiments of the Son and the light that comes from the Spirit.

Discernment does not stop at contemplation, but leads to **action**, because it comes to identify precise and concrete choices to be put in place for the good of the young. Rightly, starting from this attitude of discernment, "neither pessimist nor optimist, the Salesian of the 21st century is someone filled with hope because he knows that his centre is the Lord, capable of making all things new (cf. Rev 21,5)" (*Message to GC28*). Discernment places Jesus at the centre, as Lord of time and history, present in the life of young people and the root of every change: "This attitude of hope is capable of establishing and opening up alternative educational processes to the prevailing culture" (*Message to GC28*). Therefore, Pope Francis exhorts us, "Be neither triumphalist nor scaremongering but cheerful and hopeful men and women, crafts-persons, not robots, who can "point to ideals other than those of this world, testifying to the beauty of generosity, service, purity, perseverance, forgiveness, fidelity to our personal vocation, prayer, the pursuit of justice and the common good, love for the poor, and social friendship." (*Christus vivit*, n. 36) (*Message to GC28*).

In no. 30 of the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* of 1988, John Paul II presented some **criteria of ecclesiality** for church associations. In a clear and precise form, they help in the understanding of communion and the mission of the Church. These are points we can still study and reflect on:

- *The primacy given to the call of every Christian to holiness*, as it is manifested "in the fruits of grace which the spirit produces in the faithful" and in a growth towards the fullness of Christian life and the perfection of charity. In this sense whatever association of the lay faithful there might be, it is always called to be more of an instrument leading to holiness in the Church, through fostering and promoting "a more intimate unity between the everyday life of its members and their faith".

- *The responsibility of professing the Catholic faith*, embracing and proclaiming the truth about Christ, the Church and humanity, in obedience to the Church's Magisterium, as the Church interprets it. For this reason, every association of the lay faithful must be a *forum* where the faith is proclaimed as well as taught in its total content.

- *The witness to a strong and authentic communion* in filial relationship to the Pope, in total adherence to the belief that he is the perpetual and visible centre of unity of the universal Church, and with the local Bishop, "the visible principle and foundation of unity" in the particular Church, and in "mutual esteem for all forms of the Church's apostolate". The communion with Pope and Bishop must be expressed in loyal readiness to embrace the doctrinal teachings and pastoral initiatives of both Pope and Bishop. Moreover, Church communion demands both an acknowledgment of a legitimate plurality of forms in the as-

sociations of the lay faithful in the Church and at the same time, a willingness to cooperate in working together.

- *Conformity to and participation in the Church's apostolic goals*, that is, "the evangelization and sanctification of humanity and the Christian formation of people's conscience, so as to enable them to infuse the spirit of the gospel into the various communities and spheres of life". From this perspective, every one of the group forms of the lay faithful is asked to have a missionary zeal which will increase their effectiveness as participants in a re-evangelization.

- *A commitment to a presence in human society*, which in light of the Church's social doctrine, places it at the service of the total dignity of the person. Therefore, associations of the lay faithful must become fruitful outlets for participation and solidarity in bringing about conditions that are more just and loving within society.

The fundamental criteria mentioned here find their verification in the **actual fruits** that various group forms show in their organizational life and the works they perform, such as:

- the renewed appreciation for prayer, contemplation, liturgical and sacramental life, the reawakening of vocations to Christian marriage, the ministerial priesthood and the consecrated life.
- a readiness to participate in programmes and Church activities at the local, national and international levels.
- a commitment to catechesis and a capacity for teaching and forming Christians.
- a desire to be present as Christians in various settings of social life and the creation and awakening of charitable, cultural and spiritual works.
- the spirit of detachment and evangelical poverty leading to a greater generosity in charity towards all.
- conversion to the Christian life or the return to Church communion of those baptized members who have fallen away from the faith.

The foundation of our contemplation-action is the **maternal and active presence of Mary**: "This active motherly presence of Mary is the foundation of the Association and the inspiration for the commitment of the members to the service of the Kingdom of God." (ADMA Regulations Art. 1). This motherly presence which we have seen, touched, and experienced, animates and supports our every commitment, purpose and action in doing good. Mary is with us. She loves us and protects us. Hence the evangelical sense of service that emanates from the joy of feeling saved and being zealously committed to proclaiming and building the Kingdom of God, following the example and with the help of Mary who magnifies the Lord and at the same time declares herself his humble handmaid. We experience Mary's motherhood as she extends her hands to everyone so that all may draw near to the God of love. In particular, Mary draws us to fidelity in prayer and apostolic action, she makes us participants in her maternal concern for the salvation of all, especially the young and the poor.

Furthermore, the ecclesial criteria of discernment become a reality and mature in concrete fruits that are expressed in daily commitment and in the witness of Christian life lived in the light and with the help of Mary, living like her and making her **gospel attitudes** our own, with the purpose of growing and living in union with God in everyday life:

- FIAT: docility and availability to God's will. Mary prays with us and for us that the Holy Spirit may guide us in the search for God's will on the path to holiness.
- STABAT: fidelity and perseverance in the hour of trial and the cross. The road that Mary leads us is difficult, full of trials and falls, but she is with us and her arms will support us. She helps us to persevere so that at the end of the journey we all together can see her Son Jesus in joy and love.
- MAGNIFICAT: rendering thanks for the great things that God works in us and among us, thanking God for all the gifts we discover in life, even for the smallest gift we perceive. Mary gives thanks together with us and wants us all to feel the joy of the gifts. It is her wish that God may be everything for each one of us.

In this way we draw inspiration from Mary, to make a life-long commitment of worship of God as she did, and of devotion to her.

- Like her, *the Virgin who listens*, let us listen to the Word of God, keep it in our hearts and live it faithfully, especially in moments of trial. This will allow us to form an active awareness that will protect us from evil, help us live in the presence of God and be credible heralds and witnesses of the gospel.
- Like her, *the Virgin who prays*, let us nourish our life with simple, heartfelt prayer of gratitude and intercession to the Father.
- Like her, *the Virgin Mother*, we work together with the Pope and the Pastors of the Church for the growth of the people of God.
- Like her, we make our life an offering to God, in joyful fulfilment of the Father's will.

In particular, the annual practice of the **Spiritual Exercises** constitutes a powerful moment of spiritual renewal for individual members and groups, encouraging listening to and meditating on the Word, purification of the heart and spiritual discernment. These are special days of prayer, of ardent invocation of the Holy Spirit, of silence and renunciation, in which Mary assures us of special help and special graces.

From this exercise of discernment and contemplation we will develop a style of action that is distinguished by simplicity (essential and accessible to all) and practicality, according to the spirit of Don Bosco who made every intuition and inspiration practical and effective, bringing us back to the practicality and effectiveness of Mary's help. It is not a question of ideas, theories, pious sentiments, but rather deeds, gestures and works that allow one to feel Mary's intervention and help in the history of salvation and of the Church and in daily experience.

For personal reflection

- What is the call coming to us from God starting from today's youthful reality? What is God asking of us through the voice of the young, especially the poorest?
- What role do young people play in our ADMA group? Are they present and are they invited, or do they remain distant and unknown? Are they a motivation for our prayer and are they one of the intentions of our prayer?
- Mary is the Virgin who listens and prays, the mother who offers herself for others ... The Spiritual Exercises, retreats, and periods of adoration help us to cultivate the contemplative dimension of discernment. How do I live these moments?

For prayer

- Seek the will of God and act in a spirit of communion and service (Rom 12: 1-5)

I urge you, then, brothers, remembering the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, dedicated and acceptable to God; that is the kind of worship for you, as sensible people. Do not model your behaviour on the contemporary world, but let the renewing of your minds transform you, so that you may discern for yourselves what is the will of God -- what is good and acceptable and mature. And through the grace that I have been given, I say this to every one of you: never pride yourself on being better than you really are, but think of yourself dispassionately, recognising that God has given to each one his measure of faith. Just as each of us has various parts in one body, and the parts do not all have the same function: in the same way, all of us, though there are so many of us, make up one body in Christ, and as different parts we are all joined to one another.

For life

- Invite some young people to share a moment of instruction, prayer, or retreat.
- Get to know the situation of the young people closest to the local ADMA. Know the pastoral agents who work with them and collaborate with these.

The paper can be read at the following site:

www.admadonbosco.org

For every communication you can contact
the following email address:

animatore.spirituale@admadonbosco.org

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

ADMA - SEVILLE (Spain)

Our associations belong to the Province of Maria Auxiliadora in the Seville area. It covers a very large territory of the Province: Andalusia, Extremadura and the Canary Islands.

These Associations were founded in the schools of the Salesians and of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and also in the parishes where the sons and daughters of Don Bosco have done so much in spreading devotion to our Mother, the Help of Christians. ADMA has been present for many years in the pastoral life of these Salesian houses and parishes.

FR JUAN MANUEL MELGAR, SDB, is our spiritual animator. His life as a Salesian has been marked by instruction, catechesis, musical and spiritual animation of all kinds. He was animator of ADMA in various houses and also during seven years as a missionary in Lomé, Togo. He says he feels very much at home and that he has fond memories of Marian and brotherly love.

SR ANA LINARES, FMA, is our spiritual animator. For 53 years she has been a happy daughter of Mary Help of Christians. She has worked for many years with ADMA, as well as with Past Pupils and with various faith groups, with children and young people. She is generous and dedicated and is always willing to offer formation and help.

I am María José Vélez, and for two years I have been president of the Provincial Council of ADMA. I am a past pupil of the Salesian School in Utrera, the first Salesian school founded in Spain. The course of my life, my condition as wife and mother, and my availability, have left their mark on my commitment to the pastoral ministry of this Salesian house.



ORIGINS

On 16 February 1881 the first Salesians arrived in Spain, in Utrera where the first Salesian house was founded. On 24 March 1896 the first ADMA group was founded. This year we celebrate the 125th anniversary of our foundation. Today there are 75 ADMA groups scattered throughout our Province with more than 10,000 members.

STRUCTURE

The local councils are in constant communion with each other. The councillors belong to the local councils of different parts of our area. This gives us a clear and concise idea of the situations of the ADMA groups. The Provincial Council meets monthly. In the same way, the president of the provincial council meets every three months with the national coordination group, which means that the activity and life of the local groups is animated by the whole structure, and this animation has its main function in service. It is up to everyone to ensure that the purpose for which Don Bosco conceived ADMA is faithfully maintained and that ADMA has a future.

LIFE OF THE GROUPS

ADMA is intended for lay people who want to live their faith with Don Bosco's charism within the Association. Belonging to the association leads us to service and fraternal communion with all the members and with the members of the various groups of the Salesian Family. Local councils guide the groups to be faithful to their identity in the areas of formation, apostolate, sacramental life and charity. Formation is essential for the present and future of our ADMA members. The themes proposed by the Primary ADMA are dealt with monthly. In an annual formation meeting, local councils explore a topic of general interest. In the annual Assembly and visits to the areas, initiatives are proposed to members, ecclesial themes and Spirituality Days are encouraged and supported financially.

The highlights of our groups are the monthly Commemoration of our Mother on the 24th of each month, the Feast of Don Bosco, the Feast of Mother Mazzarello, the Annual Assembly of Mary Help of Christians, the Novena of Mary Help of Christians and the Mass and Procession on the Feast of Mary Help of Christians.

Commitment and apostolate: The spread of devotion to Mary Help of Christians is achieved through devotions, the printing of calendars, domestic chapels and chapels in the classrooms of our schools and by editing *Messages24* (provincial magazine promoted by the ADMA council) in which the news of the various groups is published every three months.

The social and charitable dimension: Christmas campaigns, participation in provincial or Salesian missionary projects, engagement with the Parish Caritas, participation in the various projects of the House and always open to the needs of members or relatives.

RELATIONSHIP WITH GROUPS OF THE SALESIAN FAMILY

The relationship with the different groups of the Salesian Family is an essential part of the life of the groups, the annual Strenna of the Province, common to all, marks the planning of each group. Council meetings of all the SALESIAN FAMILY groups, shared retreats and spiritual exercises, joint projects and shared reviews and programmes. There are many members who belong to two or more groups of the SALESIAN FAMILY.

THE FUTURE IS HERE: by the grace of Our Lady, there is a growing interest and a stimulating desire to guide the popular and Marian faith along safe and profound paths. Thanks to social networks, and despite the restrictions in this time of the pandemic, examples continually come to us from one place or another confirming this fact.

FOR THE YOUNG: each group is committed to resources that are attractive to young people: pupils of the final years of school, groups of altar boys and girls, choirs of children and young people, taking advantage of the innate ability of youth for logistical problems, order, animation, oratories, camps and summer projects, propaganda and decoration. Everything counts and from there they can follow the itinerary. Because that's where the future lies.



REGULATIONS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS

To study and update our identity

ADMA was founded by Don Bosco with the name of "Association of Devotees of Mary Help of Christians", as a privileged tool for "promoting veneration of the Blessed Sacrament and devotion to Mary Help of Christians". The Basilica was consecrated on 9 June 1868; less than a year later, on 18 April 1869, ADMA was canonically erected in the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians and on 5 April 1870, to attain a greater spread, it obtained erection as an Archconfraternity by Blessed Pius IX, with the right to join similar associations already existing or yet to be erected. On 5 July 1989 the Rector Major, Fr Egidio Viganò, with his Council, officially recognized the Association of Mary Help of Christians as a group in the Salesian Family.

Don Bosco wanted the Association to be a sign of his gratitude to the maternal presence of Our Lady in his life and work, and as a form of Christian life centred on knowledge, love and imitation of the Virgin Mary.

Already in the first Regulations drawn up by Don Bosco at the act of foundation in 1869, it was highlighted that membership was open to all, without particular conditions, and the following aims were proposed to the members: zeal in promoting piety, spirituality, and devotion "to promote the glories of the divine Mother of the Saviour" (art. 1); "Spread devotion to the Blessed Virgin and veneration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament" (art.2), working "with words, counsel, deeds and authority to promote decorum and devotion in novenas, feasts and solemnities that are celebrated in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Most Holy Sacrament"(art. 3).

In this monthly article we will analyse the ADMA Regulations currently in force, according to the 2003 revision, drawing from them ideas for reflection and implementation, to live holiness in everyday life, entrusted to Jesus and Mary.

Being part of ADMA means following a journey of sanctification and apostolate according to the charism of Don Bosco, taking Mary Help of Christians as mother and model. Let us remain united under her mantle, increasing our commitment to make her known, loved and served.

It is she who guides our steps, supports us in difficulties, comforts us in tribulations, educates us to love her Son and makes us joyful and courageous witnesses of the Gospel.

Andrea and Maria Adele Damiani

THANKS TO THE ADMAonline TEAM

The ADMAonline magazine has been published since 2007 and in this issue we want to introduce you to the team behind this publication in a simple and familiar way. It is a generous, dedicated, helpful, multicultural, faithful and constant group, which has a great love for our Mother, the Help of Christians, and for the whole Salesian Family.

The members are responsible for the translations into the six languages our magazine in which is currently published. They are also responsible for presentation and graphic design. We want to thank them for their competent, voluntary, monthly collaboration so that the magazine can reach more places, more people and so that our Mother, the Help of Christians, can be better known and loved in every corner of this world.

They are Arcadio Cuadrado, a Salesian, for the Spanish translations; Marc Mutangala, Salesian, for French; Michael Smyth, an Irish Salesian, for the English translation; Bogdan Walczykiewicz, a Salesian for the Polish translation and Leda Souza, a lay person for the Portuguese. Our design engineer is Michele Belotti. To these we can add the collaboration and supervision of our dear Fr Cameroni, a Salesian, Postulator General for the Cause of the Saints and well known to all.

To all of them THANK YOU SO MUCH.

It is up to all of us to spread our magazine. We are convinced that the commitment to preparing and publishing is important and worth it. But it is up to each member, each spiritual animator, each devotee of Mary Help of Christians to read, meditate and also spread the knowledge of the magazine to the members and to all who know Mary and wish to love her more every day.

Dear friends, we count on you to spread our magazine by post, Whatsapp, message, or by visiting our website <https://www.admadonbosco.org/adma-on-line-2020.html>. Together we can achieve a greater and better spread of devotion to Mary Help of Christians. Let's start this year 2021 by giving ADMAonline to our acquaintances.