

## MARY INVITES US TO BE BEARERS OF PEACE AND HOPE



This message comes to you at this time of grace of the Holy Year of Mercy introduced by Pope Francis, which opened on 8 December 2015, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. The Jubilee Year is a great gift of hope and peace at a very difficult time when peace is in serious danger in many parts of the world and where restlessness haunts the lives of many men and women whose hearts are weighed down with the cares and worries that afflict them.

The devastating force of hatred and evil that is spreading like a toxic cloud over the face of the earth is particularly striking. It creates much suffering and causes new forms of poverty and

injustice. Every day, before our very eyes, we see war, terrorism and evil, generating death and ruin. Pope Francis refers especially to **the rampant evil of corruption**. "This festering wound is a grave sin that cries out to heaven for vengeance, because it threatens the very foundations of personal and social life. Corruption prevents us from looking to the future with hope, because its tyrannical greed shatters the plans of the weak and tramples upon the poorest of the poor. It is an evil that embeds itself into the actions of everyday life and spreads, causing great public scandal. Corruption is a sinful hardening of the heart that replaces God with the illusion that money is a form of power. It is a work of darkness, fed by suspicion and intrigue... If it is not combated openly, sooner or later everyone will become an accomplice to it, and it will end up destroying our very existence." (*Misericordiae vultus* 19).

Behind all this there is the **insidious and murderous action of Satan**. With lies and hatred he wants to bring about the destruction of humanity and of the world with a power that is shocking and seemingly unstoppable.

**Mary Immaculate, the Help of Christians**, invites us to be strong in faith and constant in prayer, to be **bearers of peace and hope, knowing that she is praying with us and for us. From the beginning of history, she has been to the forefront in the fight against Satan**. "After the sin of Adam and Eve, God did not wish to leave humanity alone in the throes of evil. So he turned his gaze to Mary, holy and immaculate in love (cf. *Eph* 1:4), choosing her to be the Mother of man's Redeemer. When faced with the gravity of sin, God responds with the fullness of mercy. Mercy will always be greater than any sin, and no one can place limits on the love of God who is ever ready to forgive." (*Misericordiae vultus* 3). If we are united in prayer, the division of families, the errors in the clergy, the wars and everything else that leads the world to apparent ruin will be blown away.

We wish all our members and groups of ADMA a holy Christmas lived at Mary's school as bearers of peace and hope in our families and in the places where we live.

We wish you a **happy and fruitful 2016**, accompanied by the Strenna of the Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, **WITH JESUS we journey together in an adventure of the Spirit!**

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



With Mary and like Mary

Rigenerated in his Mercy

#### 4. Eve, Mary and the journey of Mercy

*Sister Linda Pocher FMA*

##### Set out on the journey

On 8 December, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, the Pope opened the Jubilee of Mercy. This liturgical feast, in fact, reminds us of "God's way of acting since the beginning of our history. After the sin of Adam and Eve, he did not want to leave humanity alone and at the mercy of evil. So he chose Mary to be holy and blameless before him in love (Eph 1, 4), and to become the Mother of the Redeemer of mankind." *As the first man, Adam, was formed from the "virgin land", not yet cultivated (Gen 2, 5.7), so in the "fullness of time" Christ, the New Adam, was formed from the Father and the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary (Gal 4.4) and all those who are united with Him in baptism, although descendants of the first Adam, become "new creatures" (2 Cor 5:17). To every sin, God responds with the fullness of mercy. Mercy will always be greater than any sin, and no one can place limits on the love of God who is ever ready to forgive.* (MV 3).

This "becoming new creatures" had its decisive moment in the death and resurrection of Jesus, but it is not yet complete. The men and women of all time, in fact, are called to take part in it. Everyone has to choose, first, whether to accept the gift of God and become a "son of light", or whether to stay in darkness (Eph 5.6 to 20). *The fact that the door of mercy has been opened once and for all in Mary, to let God enter the world, and in Jesus crucified, to let the world enter God, does not mean that everything is now done.* It is necessary for each one of us to recognise that "we are divided". Certainly the Spirit of God dwells in us as the Spirit dwelt in Mary, but at the same time, we are still fascinated in some way by the serpent, and consequently, "all of human life, whether individual or collective, shows itself to be a dramatic struggle between good and evil, between light and darkness." (Gaudium et Spes 13). According to Moiola, it is, in fact, a continuous dialectic, with two dimensions that "are always present and active. Therefore, conversion is never in a single moment. The deeper our authentic experience of God becomes, the more we realize how much God had to do to meet a stranger and allow him into communion, and the keener our sense of our need to ask for forgiveness becomes. So conversion becomes a spiritual attitude that is never for a single moment alone, but for all of life." It is a journey from "the old" to "the new", from "darkness" to "light", from Eve to Mary. We ask ourselves: **do we feel the need to be in an attitude of constant readiness for conversion? How do we make use of the sacrament of confession?**

##### The darkness of sin

*The parallel between Eve and Mary can help us to understand more deeply what we are because of sin and what we can become if, like Mary, we open ourselves unreservedly to the Spirit. To do this we can learn from a miniature painting found in a thirteenth century missal. It depicts the two women while they perform the gesture which characterizes them most. Eve reaches out to grab the forbidden fruit that is offered by the Serpent. Mary opens his arms to receive, directly from God, the fruit of the love of the Father, the infant Jesus. In both cases it is a result of the relationship, or the mystery of fertility, of the origin of life and its end: both women are called to choose the most suitable way to participate. The difference lies precisely in this choice: to grab immediately or to accept at the opportune time. Behind the different gestures lies a different interior attitude towards God and his gifts, which will translate into*

consequences of life or death for all mankind: the descendants of Eve, proud and ungrateful, are destined to "return to dust", those of Mary, humble and grateful, to resurrection and life.

One could argue, however, that Eve's choice was actually caused by the ban placed by God. Why should he create a fruit that looks "good" and "pleasant," and "desirable", and then forbid them to eat it (Genesis 2, 16 to 3.13)? The same question often arises strongly in our hearts: why are we not allowed to control our own lives? Why not eliminate anything that smacks of surrender and optimize what is pleasurable and good? The unavailability of the fruit of the tree could mean many things. It could be for our protection (the fruit is not ripe, or it is too difficult to collect). It could be to make way for a greater gift, a surprise, as we do with children to teach them gratitude and gratuity. (There is a basketful of fruit already prepared but we have to be patient). It might even be a sign of the dishonesty of the Creator, who reserves all the best things for himself. Faced with such conflicting interpretations, *the human couple are really put to the test: will they trust the Creator or not?* At this very moment when they have to make a choice, the tempter enters and makes them see in the divine command an unbearably unjust prohibition. And so Eve "takes" and "eats" and leads Adam to do the same. St. Irenaeus describes Adam and Eve as being like a couple of teenagers, because of their fragility and inexperience, they fall easily into the plots of the serpent! Does it not happen to us also, when despite being fragile and spiritually immature, we believe we are able to judge everything by ourselves, even against the judgment of the Word of God and the teachings of the Church?



After eating the fruit, the eyes of Adam and Eve are opened for real, as the serpent had said, but to their great disappointment, they did not become at all "like God". On the contrary, they become suddenly aware of being "naked", fragile and vulnerable. Consequently they feel shame at being seen by each other as they are, and afraid of being seen by God. The God who formed their flesh and bones, and gave them the breath of life, is now being perceived as a threat to their freedom. When he finally finds them, neither of them has the courage to take responsibility for what has happened. Adam blames the woman, and the woman blames the serpent.

The harmony between them has been lost. Breaking their relationship with God has a ruinous effect on the relationship of the couple, on their descendants and on all creation. But what is most interesting here is the fact that sin has virtually "switched off the light." Love has been replaced first by the illusion of being able to replace God and then by disappointment at not having succeeded. Yes, Adam and Eve are guilty, but are not able to admit it and therefore are not able to ask for or receive God's mercy.

*Now, this is the starting position of each of us. This is our situation. We find it hard to recognize and admit that we have sinned.* This is why St. John repeats forcefully to the early Christians: "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us". Even worse, we make "a liar" out of God who warns us, and this shows that "His word is not in us" (1 Jn 1,8.10). It is precisely for this reason that Jesus is so angry with the Pharisees who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous" (Luke 16:15; 18.9). In the heart of every practising Christian there is a Pharisee, more or less hidden, one who wants to appear righteous but without making the effort to be converted! We ask ourselves: **are there sins that we struggle to admit, we have never confessed or do not want to confess, either through pride or because "it will make no difference"?**

### Be open to the light, like Mary

Edith Stein, commenting on the condemnation of the serpent (Gen. 3:15), stressed that *the special task of fighting "against evil, and therefore the work preparatory to the reintegration of life" is given precise-*

ly to Eve, and therefore to every woman. "God has given me a son," Eve said, when she gave birth to the first child. It is like a premonition of a blessing given in the child. Therefore, ever after, the women of Israel saw as their vocation: to create a posterity which would see the day of salvation." Mary is part of this posterity. She, in fact, in addition to having received from God the great privilege of her Immaculate Conception - which means that she was not touched by the consequences of original sin - was also able to realize fully the strong belief that grew to maturity among her people: *God, despite everything, remains faithful. He does not deceive nor disappoint. Being rooted in this certainty, Mary becomes increasingly docile to the Spirit and, unlike Eve, perseveres with trust in the Creator, even when that trust is challenged by apparently "unjust" situations* (Mt 1,18- 19; Mk 3.31 to 35). St John Paul II presents Mary as "God's first ally against Satan and evil" and encourages women who "like Eve, could succumb to the seduction of Satan," to find in solidarity with Mary the strength to fight the enemy, becoming the first allies of God on the way of salvation." Collaboration can take in many forms: "in women's diligent commitment to personal prayer and liturgical worship, in the service of catechesis and in the witness of charity, in the many female vocations to consecrated life, in religious education in the family." *Woman, who is the womb and the guardian of life, was the first to be drawn into the trap of the enemy. She should not be afraid to be the first to undertake the task of conversion! Mysteriously but effectively, the Lord will use the fruits of every sacrifice, small or great, for the conversion of the world.*

The practical ways of undertaking this journey of conversion are mainly two: daily prayer with the Word of God - from which we receive light to recognize our sins - and the regular celebration of confession - at least once a month. By listening to the Word and confessing our sins we place the keys of our hearts in the hands of the Spirit of God, so that He may finally be free to enter, enlighten, heal and reorder our inner lives with the sweet power of his mercy. Fear of revealing our misery is a temptation. The enemy tries to keep us away from the love of God! *Here also Mary Immaculate shows us the way: she who is without sin, is not afraid to stand naked before Him. She shows us how, even when appearances may seem contrary, only good can come from the hand of God and his look upon our nudity!* Mother Mazzarello initially felt a deep "revulsion" towards confession, but she also is a witness to this truth. When she came to understand that frequent confession is "the most effective way to know our shortcomings and correct them and to grow in virtue," she began with great



determination to go to confession regularly to Don Pestarino, despite the repugnance she felt previously. Even though she was proud and impetuous by nature, she soon arrived at full self-control through the guidance of a wise priest and a "strong and firm resolution, aided by the grace of God. And she began to live with purity of conscience", avoiding anything that might hurt the heart of God or her neighbour.

A small "spiritual exercise" to put the keys of the heart in the hands of God: Every day, in prayer, do I ask God explicitly to come and bring his light, whatever the cost, even into the darkest corners of my heart?



## FAMILY CHRONICLE

### TURIN - COUNCIL PRIMARY ADMA (PART ONE)

On Sunday 1 November, Solemnity of All Saints, members of the Council of the Primary ADMA gathered with their families for a full day of sharing. In the light and grace of the Seventh Congress of Mary Help of Christians, celebrated last August in Turin, and reflecting on the experience shared in these years, each one tried to answer these questions:

- *What does being part of ADMA mean for me, for our family?*
- *What aspect of the life of the Association do I consider in need of most attention?*

**Fr Pierluigi:** looking back at our journey so far, it is immediately evident that we have not done a lot of programming but we have tried to keep listening to the will of God... In fact, it seems that from time to time Our Lady herself has shown us the way to go.

Don Bosco was a prophet, he founded ADMA because he saw that faith in God was in crisis. He felt that the Church was entering a very difficult period.

ADMA was renewed with the

family and with families. This was a specific mandate from the Rector Major Fr Pascual Chavez after the Congress in Mexico, and little by little we tried to respond to this desire of the Rector Major, which has been confirmed by Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime.

Now there is the need to take a further step: **to grow more in the relationship of truth with ourselves and in our relationships.** Everyone knows that any relationship that is not rooted in truth sooner or later breaks down. This happens in married life, and also in spiritual direction, and in the life of groups. We should not seek to remain in a comfort zone. In the things of God we must always move forward with dynamism. Otherwise we become merely functional. We become bureaucrats, maybe good organizers and managers, but without putting our heart in it, and without love. We should constantly examine the truth of our relationships. Truth is the yeast that gives meaning to everything. We see around us too many situations of corruption, lies and disintegration ... we do not want to fall into the same trap.

Another thing that needs to be emphasized is the **apostolic dimension** that underlies the Rules written by Don Bosco. ADMA is for the people of God. We must ask ourselves how we can animate and accompany the groups, in Italy and elsewhere in the world. The basic reference is to the *Regulations and the Identity Card of the Salesian Family*. We could think for example of how we might bring them together in a graphically appealing booklet, and give them to all the new members on the day of entry in the Association. We should make better use of ADMAonline as a providential instrument of formation and communion.

**Rocco:** I joined ADMA when my mother died. Mary became my mother and she is always my consolation and the one I turn to in everything. Valdocco is my point of reference in my journey of prayer and my efforts to live my entrustment to Mary.

**Barbara:** Mary is the home that I always return to. ADMA is an apostolic journey of faith with the help of Mary. I am comforted by the very thought of a life lived under the mantle of Mary.



**John:** For me ADMA is the starting point and the point of arrival of my daily life. I like the ease with which ADMA can be proposed to families as the "gateway" to the great Salesian Family. Our membership must be lived in concentric circles, respecting the journey and progress of each group. One way of entry can be the family Rosary. Participating in the Spirituality Days in Rome was a real step forward for us.

One of the great riches of ADMA is that we have all the generations of a family and all states of life, in fraternity and in a rich exchange of gifts. We are enriched by the presence of priests, religious and laity in an experience of fraternity and complementarity of vocations.

**Simonetta:** I live my membership of ADMA as a call, as a way to respond to God's will. I think it was a timely response of the Lord to the many questions we already had. I receive many gifts because I try to make myself totally available to God, trying to live my family life well within a family of families, in a journey of simple faith that is suitable for everyone and for every day. **Mary helps me to look up and not to concentrate on the problems.** I'm glad of the presence of grandparents, the testimony of many people, the gifts we continue to receive as a group and as individuals. In recent years ADMA has created between us a network of relationships that links us and supports us. It's nice to share life. The graces and joys of each one become the joy of all. It's nice to have so many friends who support us and our children in the stages of their growth: how important for this is the presence of families that follow the ADMA youth! The desire to bring this gift to others is growing day by day in our hearts. We want to bring this gift especially to those who are struggling most. We come to realize that we are always giving and receiving.

**Tullio:** For me, belonging to ADMA is the fulfilment of a dream, of a deep desire that Simonetta and I felt in our hearts ... now we understand better how necessary holiness is! You don't think you are part of a plan but God calls you right there.

One of the features I like about ADMA is that things are programmed but not too much **because we try to be trusting.** We want to respond whenever the Lord calls. The presence of Jesus and Mary enters slowly into our thinking, and this happens in each of us. The two columns, Mary and the Eucharist, are the gift that God wants to give to our families.

We learn to build relationships that are less trivial and superficial, based on Truth. We should remember the question and the answer that we want to bring to our personal meetings. **We are together for Jesus!** We want to increase our awareness: the desire of Don Bosco was to increase the faith of the people, the sanctity of the laity. St. Francis de Sales invites us to recover the modern meaning of devotion, the '*da mihi animas*'.

**Maria Adele:** we came to ADMA through our time in university. Day by day we see our faith and relationships growing. We are happy to share the fundamental values and to discover that in the important things we are not alone.

**Andrea:** We learned what it means to trust in times of trouble, but also in times of joy. We felt welcomed and it is useful to maintain the levels of approach: often people do not even know what they are looking for. They have a deep question that remains unspoken. In ADMA we have a great opportunity to offer a reality that does good and makes people think: "I would like that for my children." Learning to live a deeply Christian lifestyle is the beginning and the foundation of every apostolate.



## SAO PAULO (BRAZIL) - ECHOES FROM CONGRESS

My name is Dinéia, I coordinated the group of 11 people in the Province of San Paolo (Brazil), at the International Congress of ADMA. At the request of Fr. Edmilson, I am forwarding the views of the group. We want to congratulate all of you on the wonderful organization of the congress.

We had some difficulty in enrolling on the website, however we were helped by good communication with the support team of the Congress.

The physical space in which the Congress took place was excellent, the sound system was very good, although on the first day the simultaneous translation did not work. However, the organizers requested new equipment and everything was resolved efficiently.

The welcome from the young to the different groups of all countries was very warm.

The Congress programme was wonderful, all very expressive, and very well organized at all times. The testimonies were very powerful moments for our faith.

The programming on the Social Network was fantastic: the whole world was connected with the Congress and this was very positive.

The work of the volunteers was wonderful!

This Congress has certainly been very significant for our Association worldwide. It was very good to be with ADMA groups from around the world.

Fr Camerini, Tullio and his wife Simonetta are very charismatic and caring.

We cannot forget the presence of the Rector Major and Mother Yvonne for the whole Congress - very positive!

The Eucharistic celebrations were unforgettable!

Everything was done in gratitude to our Father and Teacher Don Bosco in his bicentenary.

## Pinerolo (Turin)

On Saturday 24 October 2015, the group "Adma Pinerolese" had the pleasure of receiving the visit of Bishop Piergiorgio Debernardi of Pinerolo. After dinner together at the oratory, there was a time of prayer with the recitation of the Holy Rosary. The Bishop encouraged the families present never to tire of praying together. It was a beautiful moment of sharing and brotherhood. There were a dozen families and their children with the Bishop of Pinerolo and the Parish Priest of Villar Perosa, Fr Roberto Comba.



ADMA Philippines Council Officers, SDB & FMA Delegates with Fr. Vaclav Klement, SDB.



NATALE 2015

Giubileo della Misericordia



*Il pensiero ora si volge alla Madre della Misericordia. La dolcezza del suo sguardo ci accompagna in questo Anno Santo, perché tutti possiamo riscoprire la gioia della tenerezza di Dio. Nessuno come Maria ha conosciuto la profondità del mistero di Dio fatto uomo. Tutto nella sua vita è stato plasmato dalla presenza della misericordia fatta carne.*

(Papa Francesco – *Misericordiae Vultus* 24)

Nel mistero del S. Natale che ci rivela il Volto Misericordioso di Dio auguriamo di essere portatori di Pace e di Speranza in questo mondo inquieto

Santo Natale 2015 e felice 2016

Don Pierluigi Cameroni, Tullio Lucca con  
l'ADMA Primaria di Torino-Valdocco