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For the right to education.

WE ARE ASKING EVERYONE TO SEND US AN ARTICLE, A PHOTO OF A FORMATION MEETING, THE COMMEMORATION OF THE 24TH OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS, A VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY BEING CARRIED OUT. The article (.doc format, max. 1200 characters without counting spaces) and a maximum of 2 photos (.jpg digital format and no less than 1000px wide), with a title and/or brief description, must be sent to adma@admadonbosco.org. It is necessary to indicate in the subject line of the e-mail *"Family Events"* and in the text the author's data (name, surname, place of the shot, affiliation Adma, city, country). *By sending, you automatically authorise Adma to process, publish, even partially, and disclose the article and photographs in any form. The images may be published, at the editorial staff's discretion, on the website www.admadonbosco.org, and/or in other Adma websites, accompanied by a caption.*



Pilgrims in hope, guided by Mary



We begin a new year 2025, full of hopes and challenges, a time when faith and hope illumine our path. In the new year, both the universal Church and the Salesian Family invite us to live intensely the experience of being **pilgrims of hope**, a mission that embraces the whole

world and finds its youngest face in children and young people, the present and the future of society.

Pope Francis, with the Jubilee 2025 and the theme *'Pilgrims of Hope'*, reminds us that Christian life is a continuous pilgrimage towards God, characterised by reconciliation, unity and rediscovering patience and joy even in the midst of difficulties. This Holy Year offers us the opportunity to renew our trust in God's constant presence in history, in a world that cries out for peace, justice and fraternal encounter.

The Strenna 2025, *'Anchored in hope, pilgrims with the young'*, resonates as an invitation to be companions on the journey of the new generations, showing them that hope is not just an abstract concept but a living and transforming force, capable of facing life's challenges with courage and joy.

Both messages find a special echo in this first month of the year, dedicated to **Mary, Mother of God**, whose solemnity we celebrate on 1st January. Mary, as Mother and Guide, accompanies the Church on this jubilee journey and the Salesian Family in its educational and pastoral mission. She, the first

pilgrim of faith, teaches us to look to the future with confidence and to remain firmly anchored in love and hope, even in the uncertainties of our time.

The new year 2025 challenges us to live with an open and willing heart, *to be signs of hope and beacons of light* for those around us. Just as Mary accompanied Jesus and the disciples on their journeys, today she walks with us, supporting us with her motherly love and guiding our steps towards a full encounter with Christ.

May this **Jubilee and Salesian Year** be for all a time of grace and transformation. With Mary at our side, let us move on as authentic pilgrims of hope, committed to building a more just and fraternal world together with the young people and all those who seek a horizon of peace.

Happy New Year under the protection of Mary and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit!

Fr. Gabriel Cruz Trejo, SDB
Spiritual Animator ADMA, Valdocco.

Renato Valera,
President ADMA Valdocco.





Formation

A great symphony of prayer in the jubilee of the Church:

5. *“We adore you (in the morning) – Starting the day in a Christian way”*

This year's itinerary will be marked by meditation on common Christian prayers, one for each month. These are well-known texts, having permanent potential. Reflecting on them will bring surprises, making these prayers appear in a new light and, perhaps, making us eager to recite them every day, should we ever have neglected them. Let us begin with the prayer that traditionally opens a Christian's day.

*I adore you, my God
and I love you with all my heart.
I thank you for having created me,
made me a Christian
and preserved me on this night.
I offer you the actions of the day:
let them all be according to your holy will.
For your greater glory.
Preserve me from sin and all evil.
May your grace be always with me
and with all my loved ones.
Amen.*

'I adore you, my God, and love you with all my heart'.

The attack is challenging, no doubt about it. They are words that, as they are spoken, require us to be true to ourselves, lest they sound false on our lips. Truly, Lord, I adore you and love you with all my heart? After all, who can say they love God with all their heart? More than a declaration of intent, the 'I adore you' thus becomes a provocation, an insistent invitation to do what the prayer says. It is by telling oneself to love God that, little by little, one begins to love him seriously, so that the will adheres to the words uttered and is gradually modelled on them.

Let us not miss the verb that gives the entire prayer its title: 'I adore you'. Christian love is by its very nature meant to spread over many, while adoration is reserved for God alone. An undue claim? Not at all. On closer inspection, adoring God is a condition for being able to love him precisely as God, that is, with all one's heart. There is a close connection between adoration and love: if reverence for God is lacking, if adoration ceases, one soon loses even the taste for the things of God, for prayer itself, and finally love for creatures, reduced to an object of profit, is also

extinguished. The lack of adoration is the remote root of all abuse, because adoration preserves charity and keeps it in its proper order.

'I thank you for creating me, making me a Christian and preserving me on this night'. Aware of our precariousness, of the structural fragility of our existence, we recognise that we have received everything from God: We thank him for the life he granted us by creating us out of nothing, and for the renewal of that life he gives us even today. This awareness, if assimilated, keeps us small, humble, meek towards others, authentically poor in spirit (cf. Mt 5:3). Whoever knows that he has received everything, does not impose himself on others, does not pretend anything and learns to rejoice in every little thing, because he accepts it as a divine gift. The primacy that God claims in our lives (= worship) is not an encumbrance, much less an arrogant claim.

Without God, without this tasty friendship with Him, even the other goods fade and we would not be able to enjoy them to the full.

After giving thanks for the gift of life, which is the basic condition for every other gift, we move on to thank God for the gift of the Christian faith, which discloses to us the meaning of life. What would it be worth to live even many years, yet deprived of the knowledge of God and the prospect of a blissful eternity lived in his friendship?

'I thank you for... making me a Christian'. Let us be honest: am I happy to be a Christian? Do I recognise the beauty of the faith in which I was baptised? Do I have a lively desire to deepen and enjoy, first and foremost, that faith which, as a parent or catechist, I propose to the new generations? We could push the reflection a little further through an exercise of imagination: what would become of my life without God? If God suddenly disappeared from my life, would I miss him, or would everything remain as before?

'I offer you the actions of the day'... Since the prayer is recited in the morning, when one has a whole day to live, rightly the 'I adore you' goes on to entrust



God with the day. It may turn out wonderfully, or it may be a disaster, because not everything depends on us. But there is one thing we can do: offer our actions to the Lord in advance, asking him that they conform to his will. Saying in the morning: 'I offer you the deeds of this day' is like making a commitment before the Lord, to perform only those deeds that He may like, as if we were collecting them in a basket that in the evening, anxiously, we will present to Him. The offering of our actions, repeated perhaps several times in the course of the day, is a powerful incentive to act always and in everything, even in the smallest things, in a way that conforms to God's will. After all, when we have done what pleases God, we have done everything and we should be at peace, even if outwardly the work could be perfected, or is subject to criticism. Let us keep this in mind: only if we strive to act as God wants and because He wants us to, will we find peace and be happy where the Lord intended us to be.

But in the adventure of a new day, not everything runs smoothly. So here is the wise plea: **Preserve me from sin and all evil!** Note the order of the requests: first of all, God is asked to preserve us from sin, because sin is the greatest evil that can happen to us, simply because it causes us to lose the greatest good, which is God!

This knowledge should infuse us with serenity, even in the midst of the seriousness of the struggle. In prayer we are turning to the One who is more powerful than all evil, because the Lord Jesus, risen from the dead, has already overcome them. Faced with the evil that threatens to overwhelm him, the Christian does not recklessly advance alone, presuming on his own strength, but takes refuge in the shadow of the Cross and confidently asks for divine help. Often in the spiritual life, a tenacious prayer achieves what years of effort had failed to achieve...

The prayer of adoration ends on a sweet note: 'May your grace be always with me and all my loved ones'. Let us pay attention to the objective of this prayer, to what we are asking for ourselves and our loved ones: God's grace, that is, the very life of God, poured out on those who love him. So that, 'related' to God, we can participate in the mystery of his Trinitarian life, enjoying moment by moment his sweet friendship. Is there anything more beautiful in a human life?

Whoever has experienced, even fleetingly, what it means to live in God's grace, instinctively understands that this is the highest good, and therefore also desires it for those he loves most: Your grace be always with me and all my loved ones.

Fr. Marco Panero, SDB



We can be sure of this: God wants us to stay away from evil more than we do. If, therefore, we ourselves make this request of Him, will He not help us? 'Ask and it will be given you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you... What father among you, if his son asks him for a loaf of bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks him for a fish, will he give him a snake instead of a fish? ... If therefore you, who are evil, know how to give good things to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!' (Lk. 11:9-13).



Family Alphabet

D as *Donna* (Woman)



It is not all about knowing a few grammatical rules, but what happens when even the alphabets disappear? Out of metaphor: it is not always easy to love each other in the family, but what happens if man and woman disappear, if it is no longer clear what male and female are, if the idea that male and female are just 'socio-cultural constructions' passes?

The disappearance of women

Experts are worried. An avalanche of books with disturbing titles are coming out: 'the disappearance of women', 'the absence of fathers', 'the defeat of the genders'. The end of patriarchal civilisation has coincided with the advent of a 'matrifocal' culture, which replaces the exasperation of the authority of fathers with the exasperation of the protective role of mothers. Hard to say which is worse. What would you choose: rules without a heart or affection without rules? The alternative is paralysing.

The price of some necessary emancipatory achievements seems high: for women as well as men. Meanwhile the female body continues to be violated, commodified, medicalised. But what is most worrying is that women, instead of gaining in femininity, have become masculinized. Yes, because as Hadjadj says, after all, 'feminism is not feminine'. For their part, men, guilty and weakened by a culture that devalues all that is vertical, linear and affirming in favour of what is horizontal, circular and expressive, feel lost. The problem is serious, because recessive males and aggressive women ultimately do not like each other, and although they want to love each other, they cannot: the relationship between the sexes, at first friendly and carefree, soon becomes problematic and conflictual.

For a culture of reciprocity

There is no doubt: machismo and feminism demoralise the human. To respond to male chauvinist despotism with the simple self-

determination of women is to make a mistake in the opposite direction. The uncoupling of femininity from motherhood due to the advent of contraceptive practices does not play into the woman's hands, but rather into the man's. 'The womb is mine and I run it' is no longer just a dreadful 1960s slogan, but has become mainstream mentality and casual practice in large sections of the female population. But the reality is that a bride's body is a donated body, and that a mother's womb is a space for gestation, not management!

In any case, machismo and feminism forget what is essential, namely that man and woman are made for each other: they only understand each other in mutual respect, love and service. And the minimum of mutual respect is to recognise with humble admiration the distinctive aspects of male and female which is not easy today. It is almost three centuries that secular culture speaks of man as 'subject' and that Catholic culture insists on the idea of 'person', thus playing into the hands of individualism, which interprets freedom as 'autonomy' and forgets all the concrete determinations in which it is constituted and matures: the limits of the body, the difference of the sexes, family history, civil heritage, religious affiliation. Thus we have the contradiction of a society that is both eroticised and asexual! Which means: many stimuli but little capacity to process them, intense affections and unstable bonds, spontaneity without responsibility, conjugality dissociated from parenthood. The truth is that there are no male or female subjects: what exists are men and women!

It is a matter of understanding, outside of any rigid division, that man and woman respectively represent the active and receptive dimensions of the one love. Indeed - we did not need Aristotle to realise this - man generates from himself, while woman generates from another. This is why, within the one love, which always distinguishes and unites, the masculine is predominantly distinctive (i.e. more outwardly and action-oriented, more attentive to understanding, measuring, defining, designing, transforming...), while the feminine is predominantly connective (i.e. more inwardly and relation-oriented, more attentive to understanding, uniting, accompanying, maturing...). And this is why



the man rather emphasises the strength of love, while the woman emphasises the tenderness of the same love: thanks to the man, the woman can also be strong, thanks to the woman the man can also be tender. We are not in the realm of possession, but in the realm of mutual self-giving!

The feminine genius

We cannot dwell on this, but rediscovering the woman is certainly a priority, because, as Evdokimov, one of the greatest Orthodox theologians, used to say, 'a civilisation is only as good as its women'. And this is because, as brilliantly explained by Costanza Miriano, whose books we recommend for enjoyable reading, the so-called feminine 'submission' (Eph 5) is nothing other than the marvellous capacity of women to carry, support and bear, to care for and take charge with 'passionate' love of all that is human. John Paul II, in his wonderful Encyclical on the dignity of woman, truthfully states that 'to woman God entrusts man in a very special way', every man, the whole man. Woman is therefore essentially care and tenderness, because she is the custodian of the human. And she is, as the Church is not tired of repeating, as the virgin, bride and mother. In a society that is less and less sensitive to the profound connections of femininity and



virginity, of femininity and motherhood, and where we ultimately marry less and less, it is beautiful to be able to bear witness with words and life to the fundamental and constitutive ways of being a woman: 'virgin', i.e. capable of inner unity and integrity of relationships (think of the passion and resoluteness of St. Catherine); 'bride', i.e. capable of sincere self-giving and acceptance of the other (St. Bridget's wholeness bride comes to mind); 'mother', as feminine maturity and fullness beyond natural fertility (Mother Teresa's fertility without borders).

Fr. Roberto Carelli SDB

(Source: Roberto Carelli – Family Alphabet)

Salesian Blesseds and Saints

8 January: Blessed Tito Zeman, *Salesian Priest, martyr*

The story of Tito Zeman is an excellent example of fidelity to Don Bosco's charism, particularly through his zeal and love to save the vocation of young Salesians when the communist regime came to Slovakia and was established.

Tito Zeman, a Slovak Salesian, was born into a Christian family on 4th January 1915 in Vajnory, near Bratislava. He wanted to become a priest from the age of 10. He completed his secondary and high school studies in the Salesian houses in Šaštín, Hronský Svätý Benďadik and in Frištak u Holešova. In 1931, he began his novitiate and on 7th March 1938 made his perpetual profession at the Sacred Heart Institute in Rome. A student of theology at the Gregorian University in Rome, and then in Chieri, he used his free time to do apostolate in the oratory. In Turin, on 23rd June 1940, he reached the much desired goal of priestly ordination by Cardinal Maurilio Fossati. On 4th August 1940, he celebrated

his first Mass in Vajnory.

On the night of 13th /14th April 1950, the communist regime banned religious orders in Czechoslovakia, occupied the convents and the houses of religious men and women with its militia, deporting consecrated men and women to convents that had been transformed into concentration camps: in Slovakia this dramatic night was called 'The Night of the Barbarians'. Providence had it that Fr. Zeman was in the diocesan parish of Šenkvice during those months and thus avoided imprisonment. It was an idea of the young Salesian Fr. Ernest Macák to smuggle young clerics across the Czechoslovak-Austrian border, taking them to the Salesian mother house in Turin, where they would be able to complete their theological studies, reach the priesthood and, with the hoped-for rapid fall of communism, spiritually rebuild their homeland.



Zeman took charge of this risky activity: he began to prepare the clandestine passage across the border between Slovakia and Austria and organised two expeditions for more than 30 young Salesians. On the third expedition, in which some diocesan priests persecuted by the regime also took part, he was arrested with most of the group members. During the various interrogations, they beat him and broke some of his teeth. When Fr. Zeman experienced the violence on himself and saw it in his confreres, he took it upon himself and blamed himself for organising their escape abroad. Regarding this period, Fr. Tito himself declared: "When they caught me, it was a Way of the Cross for me. From a psychic and physical point of view, I experienced it during the pre-trial detention. In reality, it lasted two years... I lived in constant fear that at any moment, the door of my cell would open and they would take me outside, to the place of execution. You see, that's why all my hair turned white. If I go back to the unimaginable torture I suffered during interrogations, I can honestly tell you that I still get the shivers today. In beating and torturing me, they used inhuman methods. For example, they would bring a bucket full of sewage, immerse my head in it and hold it in until I began to suffocate. They would kick me hard all over my body, beat me with any object. After one of these blows, I became deaf for several days".

He underwent a harsh trial during which he was described as a traitor to his country and spy to Vatican, and the attorney general demanded the death penalty for him. On 22nd February 1952, he was sentenced to 'only' 25 years in prison without parole, and branded as a 'mukl', i.e. a 'man destined for elimination'. He only came out of prison, on parole and after being excluded from numerous amnesties, after almost 13 years of imprisonment, on 10th March 1964; his health was by then deteriorated. He lived with his brother, working as a labourer in a textile warehouse. He was later allowed to work as a warehouse worker; an occupation he held until the end of his life. Now irreparably scarred by the sufferings he endured in prison, he died five years later, on 8th January 1969, surrounded by a glorious reputation for martyrdom and holiness. He lived his ordeal with a great spirit of sacrifice and offering: "Even if I lost my life, I would not consider it wasted, knowing that at least one of those I helped became a priest instead of me".



The dedication, courage and sacrifice shown at the highest level by Fr. Tito during his clandestine escape across the border show that he is a priest who can be described as a martyr for the salvation of vocations. Unjustly imprisoned, tortured, condemned, kept in hard prison for 13 years, and subsequently always supervised and prevented from fully carrying out his priestly and educational vocation, he is an example and model of a pastor, capable of spending and giving his life for those young people who, in their hearts and also in their social lives, were prevented from following Christ more closely. His message, 'Always act according to Don Bosco's model and others will follow you', is still relevant today.

Prayer

*O Almighty God
you have called Fr. Tito Zeman
to follow the charism of St. John Bosco.
Under the protection of Mary Help of Christians
he became a priest and educator of youth.
He lived according to your commandments
and among the people he was known and esteemed
for his affable character and availability for all.
When the enemies of the Church suppressed human
rights and the free expression of faith,
Fr. Tito did not lose courage
and persevered on the path of truth.
For his fidelity to the Salesian vocation
and for his generous service to the Church,
he was imprisoned and tortured.
With audacity he resisted the torturers
and for this he was humiliated and mocked.
Everything he suffered for love and with love.
We beseech Thee, O Almighty Father
glorify your faithful servant
and grant us, through his intercession,
the grace we ask of you...
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Fr. Pierluigi Cameroni, SDB

(Source: Pierluigi Cameroni - 'Like stars in the sky')



Family Events

ADMA at Puerto Rico

The ADMA in Puerto Rico had the blessing of the ADMA aggregation diploma.

Fr. Wilfredo Sdb presided over the Holy Mass together with our parish priest Fr. Omar. It was a very grand celebration. Twenty members of the group participated.



Argentina: New Diploma of ADMA at Santiago del Estero

On the 23rd and 24th November 2024 part of the Council of the Provincial ADMA ARN went to Santiago del Estero (from Río Tercero, Alta Gracia, Córdoba and Tucumán) to experience a fraternal and formative meeting. During the Holy Mass, Fr. Orlando Sánchez sdb (our Spiritual Animator) presented the Diploma to the local ADMA members, including Fr. Alex Arena sdb (ADMA Animator Santiago del Estero).

It was a very emotional meeting and one could perceive the love for Mary in the members.



Uruguay: Annual meeting of ADMA

Sarandí del Yí, Uruguay - November 2024 - On the 17th November, the annual meeting of the Association of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA) from Uruguay took place. The day was filled with joy, reflection, prayer and one could feel the presence of Mary Help of Christians. The meeting was animated by Fr. José Correa, SDB, National Animator of the ADMA, and by Fr. Julio González, parish priest of Sarandí del Yí.





Brazil: Provincial meeting of ADMA of Brazil - Campo Grande

Campo Grande, Brazil - November 2024- The members of the Association of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA) of the Province of Brazil-Campo Grande (BCG) met last 9th November, at the parish of Mary Help of Christians in Campo Grande, to discuss the statutes of the Association and to finalise the lines of action for the coming year. The event was attended by 55 ADMA members, from different local centres of the Province. Also present for the occasion was Fr.



Fr. Ricardo Carlos, BCG Provincial, who welcomed those present. In addition to the provincial, other Salesians too took part, Fr. Pedro Borges, Rector of the community, Fr. Augusto Issao Kian who helped in the organisation of the activities, and Fr. Adalberto Alves de Jesus, Director of the presence in Indápolis (MS). During the event, information was shared about the International Congress of Mary Help of Christians held from 29th August to 1st September in Portugal and there was an invitation

to participate in the next International Congress which will be held in the Philippines. The meeting included the celebration of Mass and moments of prayer and sharing among the participants, who shared the difficulties and joys of their local centres. Finally, a spiritual retreat was scheduled at the 'Casa do Sonho', in Chapada dos Guimarães (MT), for 23-24 March 2025.

Monthly Prayer Intention

For the right to education

We wish to unite the prayers of all ADMA groups around the world for the intention of Pope Francis.

For the right to education

We pray that migrants, refugees and people affected by war always see their right to education, necessary to build a better world.

