

MARY, MOTHER OF TRUST



Dear Friends,

As we continue our journey we enter slowly into a precious time of the year: a time of preparation for the death and resurrection of Christ. It is a time of prayer, discernment, and choice and time for a fresh start!

We cannot fail to call to mind today, at the beginning of Lent, the image of Pope Francis praying for the end of the pandemic - alone in St Peter's Square. It was 27 March 2020 and then also we were in the season of Lent. It is an image of our Pope full of suffering and faith, which certainly reminded many of us of the dream of the two pillars: Pope Francis is holding the helm of the ship steady in the midst of an inexplicable storm and he anchors it to the Eucharist and to Mary. On that ship there is the Church, there are Christians, there is the whole world, and a world that can find

peace and salvation only by faith in Christ and by entrusting itself to Mary.

When we think about what happened in the past year, what does it mean for us to remain anchored to the two pillars? What is the right way to live our faith today, tomorrow and always, our devotion to Mary Help of Christians, our love for Jesus in the Eucharist? Lent can be an important time to rediscover meaning and direction in our journey of faith.

Two instruments come to our aid in our Lenten discernment: the beautiful encyclical "Fratelli Tutti" by Pope Francis and the Strenna "Moved by Hope" given to us by our Rector Major, Don Angel Artime. Pope Francis' invitation is above all "to dream together, because when you dream alone you risk seeing mirages" and the dream is precisely the leitmotif of our formation programme for this year! What are we to dream? Dream of a more human and fraternal world in which we are able to take care of others.

Pope Francis returns to the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10, 25-37) and thinking of the abandoned man he says "several people passed him by, but they went their way, they did not stop. They were people with important functions, but they did not have in their heart love for the common good. They weren't prepared to waste a few minutes to assist a wounded man. There was only one who stopped and gave time to the wounded man. This prompts for us an uncomfortable question "Who do you identify with?" Who do we identify with? The story "reveals to us an important characteristic of the human being: we are made for the fullness that is reached only in love" because God is love and whoever remains in love remains in God and God remains in him (Jn 1, 4-16). Indifference to suffering is not a choice open to us" the Pope continues. "Will we bend down to touch and heal the wounds of others? This is the current challenge that we must not be afraid of."

"There is a detail about those who pass at a distance that we cannot overlook" - says Pope Francis - "they were religious people, they dedicated themselves to offering worship to God. This is noteworthy: it indicates that believing in God and worshipping him do not guarantee that we live as God wants us to live." Pope Francis then quotes St. John Chrysostom: "Do you really want to honour the body of Christ? Do not despise him when he is naked. Do not honour him in the temple with silk vestments, while outside you let him suffer cold and nakedness."

And in the beautiful Strenna on hope the Rector Major reminds us that "we are willed and loved by God to be the mirror of his hope," to "reflect the light that makes all things new". The Strenna invites us to be "the hand that changes", to pass from individualism to fraternity, from division to unity, from discouragement to trust, opening our doors and our hearts. Don Angel reminds us that a world without God is a world without hope. God is a sun that shines forever, but are we able to see him? And to show him to the world?

If we reread Don Bosco's well-known dream in the light of these guidelines, what do we see? What invitation do we receive as the association of Mary Help of Christians?

We can see that the ship anchored to the two columns is not a stationary ship in a safe harbour nor even a ship that has run aground. The link to the two columns does not indicate immobility or isolation: we must imagine that ship in motion, with the bow turned towards new horizons of fraternity, ready to bring Jesus to the world, to the weak and the poor. Devotion to Mary Help of Christians - Our Lady of hard times - and love for Jesus in the Eucharist keep that ship safe even when navigating in an open sea, rough and complex like our world today. Supported by prayer, which brings hope, that ship is capable of taking on new challenges, getting involved in service to others and in the apostolate, dreaming of a future in which if we let ourselves be guided by God, He will make all things new ("Behold, I make all things new" - Rev 21,5).

Here then is our invitation for Lent: let us not take refuge only in our being religious persons and good Christians, let us flee from an aseptic faith, let us free ourselves from every form of sterile devotion. Let us not be attached to the two columns as a point of arrival as if that were enough. Rather, let us allow ourselves to be transformed by Jesus so that our prayer and adoration may bear fruits of charity, so that "our fidelity to the Lord is always proportioned to love for our brothers". Let us ensure that devotion to Mary Help of Christians becomes true imitation, as we rediscover in the Mother of God the courage to entrust ourselves to Mary, to go out of ourselves and set out on a journey at the service of our neighbour. In this way we will open our hearts, our minds, our groups, our meetings, and our works to others and to the newness that God has in store for us.



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

ADMA formation programme 2020-2021

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

5. THE COURAGE TO IMMERSE ONESELF IN REALITY

Speaking of the historical event that gave rise to the Salesian charism, Pope Francis affirms with great finesse in a very precious note contained in his Message to GC 28: "Thanks to the help of the wise Cafasso, Don Bosco discovered who he was in the eyes of the young prisoners; and those young prisoners discovered a new face in Don Bosco's gaze. So together they discovered the dream of God, who needs these encounters to manifest Himself. Don Bosco did not discover his mission in front of a mirror, but in the pain of seeing young people who had no future. The Salesian of the 21st century will not discover his own identity unless he can suffer with "the large numbers of young lads... fine healthy youngsters, alert of mind but seeing them idle there, infested with lice, lacking food for body and soul, horrified me... Public disgrace, family dishonour, and personal shame were personified in those unfortunates" (Memoirs of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales, 48); and we could add: youngsters of our very Church.

Don Bosco not only faced reality and stood up to it. He immersed himself completely in reality, he got his hands dirty with the reality. If we think well about it, this is the logic of the incarnation, a sign of divine pedagogy, which is first and foremost a choice of total sharing with the life of people. It means doing away with the notion of a "safe distance", or a "wall of separation". And in doing so, we know, he entered a zone of risk, tension, and fear. During this time of pandemic, we know very well that people who come close to those who are infected risk being infected in turn. We know how many nurses, doctors, priests and religious have lost their lives by coming close to others to serve them. Proximity is always risky, and it takes great courage and great love to stay close to the young, especially the poorest, sharing their uncertainty, entering the world of their frailties, and becoming rejected with them.

But Don Bosco did this with great courage even though it meant putting his "ecclesiastical career" at risk. He was not afraid to enter the world of young people: "The Salesian Oratory and everything that arose from it, as the Memoirs of the Oratory tell us, came about as a response to the life of the young with a face and a history. This set a young priest in motion who was incapable of remaining neutral or unmoved by what he saw happening before him." Don Bosco, like Jesus, was neither indifferent nor unmoved, but in response to the Lord's appeals, he entered into an "act of permanent conversion", which involved and complicated "his whole life and that of those that were around him" (Message to GC28).

For the members of ADMA, the way to live this courageous immersion in the reality that characterized Don Bosco's mission on behalf of poor and abandoned young people is through **entrustment to Mary Help of Christians renewed daily**. Being part of ADMA means following a programme of sanctification and apostolate according to Don Bosco's charism, taking Mary Help of Christians as mother and model. She it is 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. The reason for participating in ADMA is precisely faith, the "belief" in Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary Help of Christians. What unites the members is faith in Jesus Christ and entrustment to Mary Help of Christians. Faith makes us intervene, take initiatives, encourage, help, and urge others to help by dedicating ourselves to an evangelical cause, to human promotion and to the education of youth. Our prayer, our membership of the Association, our Eucharistic life, and our fidelity to the Pope and to the pastors of the Church are expressed through commitment and the witness of life.

It is from our belonging motivated in this way that we derive the commitment to participate in the youth and popular mission proper to the Salesian charism, valuing the commitment to safeguard, increase and defend the faith among the people of God.

"Today, when faith is severely tested, and several sons and daughters of the People of God are exposed to tribulations because of their fidelity to the Lord Jesus, when humanity ... shows a serious crisis of spiritual values, the Church feels the need for the maternal intervention of Mary to restore adherence to the one Lord and Saviour, to carry on the evangelization of the world with the freshness and courage of our Christian origins, to enlighten and guide the faith of communities and individuals, in particular to educate in the Christian sense of life the young, to whom Don Bosco gave his whole life as father and teacher "(John Paul II, Angelus of 31 January).

Religiosity is not an end in itself. It is incarnated in apostolic, educational and charitable works in one's parish as a concrete expression of communion and collaboration with the local Church and as a manifestation of the Salesian charism in one's ecclesial environment. Being part of ADMA means having Mary as our model, being humble and having a heart full of love for one's neighbour. Mary guides our steps, supports us in difficulties, comforts us in tribulations, educates us to love her Son. She shares our journey of formation for the defence and witness of the Catholic faith.

For personal reflection

- Do we know the needs of individuals and families close to us? Are we close to the poorest (young and old)?
- How do we share the difficult reality of so many people, families and young people? How do we get close to them with prayer, closeness, solidarity?
- What is our commitment to participation in the youth and popular mission proper to the Salesian charism?

For prayer:

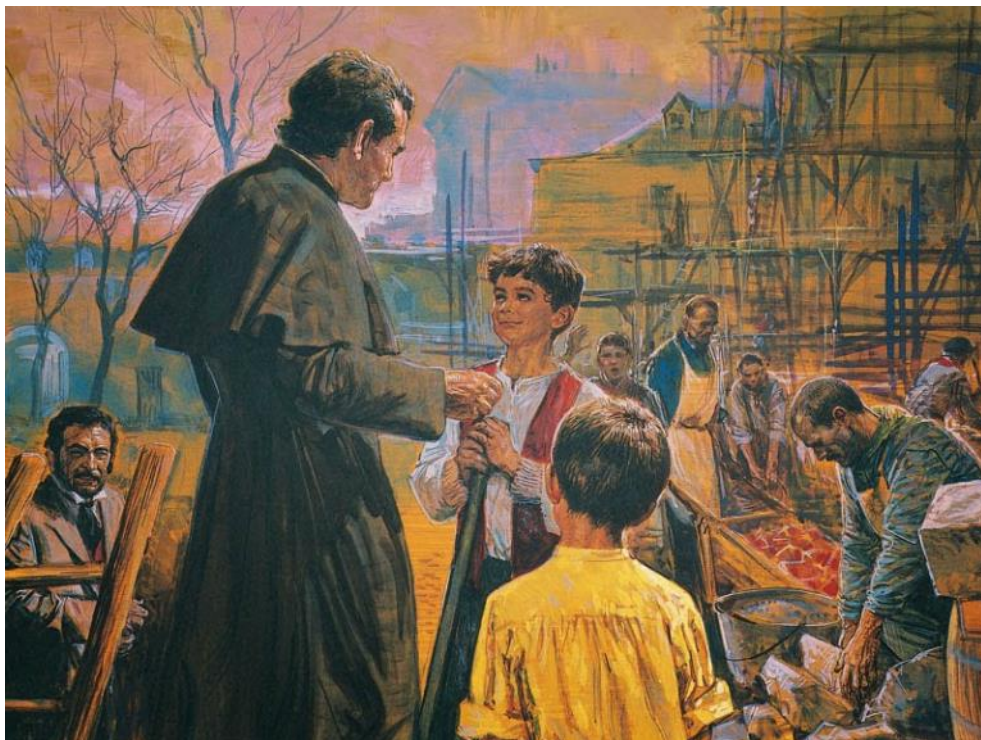
- Discover, contemplate, recognize the face of Christ in others (Mt 25,31-46):

"When the Son of man comes in his glory, escorted by all the angels, then he will take his seat on his throne of glory. All nations will be assembled before him and he will separate people one from another as the shepherd separates sheep from goats. He will place the sheep on

his right hand and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right hand, "Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take as your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you made me welcome, lacking clothes and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me." Then the upright will say to him in reply, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome, lacking clothes and clothe you? When did we find you sick or in prison and go to see you?" And the King will answer, "In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me." Then he will say to those on his left hand, "Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you never gave me food, I was thirsty and you never gave me anything to drink, I was a stranger and you never made me welcome, lacking clothes and you never clothed me, sick and in prison and you never visited me." Then it will be their turn to ask, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, a stranger or lacking clothes, sick or in prison, and did not come to your help?" Then he will answer, "In truth I tell you, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me." And they will go away to eternal punishment, and the upright to eternal life.'

For life:

- Do some work of charity towards the most needy. Donate some time to others: volunteering, personal commitment ...
- To be close to the sick people; to be close to some sick Salesians to get to know them and share some aspect of life with them.



GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

ADMA IN SICILY (ITALY)

Our associations belong to the Salesian Province of Sicily and are aggregated to the Primary ADMA in Turin. Sicily is a big island. The associations are distributed throughout the island: most of them are located alongside SDB works, some alongside FMA works and still others in diocesan parishes.

ADMA in Sicily has many members of different ages; in addition, in many centres, there is ADMA youth which includes boys and girls aged 16 and over. Equally numerous are the aspirants who undertake the programme - lasting about two years - to become part of the association. In 2021 there are about 60 aspirants, distributed among the various local centres.

Don Paolo Cicala SDB has been our spiritual animator since 2017. He has been a Salesian since 1961 (the date of his first profession) and a priest since 1972. Our Lady has always been present in his religious and priestly life. Since 2018 he has led various pilgrimages to Syracuse, Lourdes and Medjugorje. In recent years his role as ADMA animator has been significant. He is very happy to work "with" and "for" our Heavenly Mother and to collaborate with the members of the ADMA Provincial Council and with the ADMA FMA Animator.

Sister Eleonora Ballo FMA has been in religious life for twenty-eight years and has been spiritual animator of the ADMA association since November 2019. On 5 August 1993 she made her profession as an FMA. She obtained a diploma in opera singing at the Vibo Valentia conservatory and taught for some time in schools. She also served as the local delegate of the Past Pupils Association first in Palermo and then in San Cataldo. In August 2020 she was called to fulfil the role of music teacher at the secondary school of the FMA in Messina. Her desire is to be able to share with all who approach her the joy that comes from being a gift for all.

I am Salvatore Di Maio and since November 2019 I have been Provincial President of ADMA in Sicily, a role that I carry out with great enthusiasm, trying to make myself available to all the local councils. I am married, I have two daughters and together with my family I have been an ADMA member since 2009. I offer my service in the Salesian community of Alcamo (TP), where I hold the position of local council member. My aim is to create harmony among all the ADMA associates of Sicily, so that we can feel like one big family "in the heart of the world" and rediscover our mission of evangelization on a daily basis "this is your field, this is where you have to work".



ORIGINS

ADMA was started in Sicily over 100 years ago. Currently it is present in twenty-seven centres distributed throughout the island and has about 1,350 members of different ages. Last year, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the founding of Primary ADMA, the Alcamo community celebrated 50 years of the association's presence and in 2020 the ADMA of Marsala celebrated 80 years.

STRUCTURE

Local councils are made up of at least four members: President, Vice-president, Treasurer, Secretary and possibly one or more councillors, according to the needs of the group. Local councils have always existed and relate directly to the Turin Primary; in 2004 the first Provincial Council was established with four members (President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary) and two Spiritual Animators, one SDB and one FMA; since then all local councils have related to it. The Provincial Council meets on average four times a year and meets the local Councils twice a year, while all the members meet on the occasion of two unmissable annual events: the Marian pilgrimage and the Spiritual Exercises.

LIFE AND ACTIVITY OF OUR ASSOCIATIONS

ADMA is an association of lay people who live a life of devotion to Jesus in the Eucharist and Mary Help of Christians, the two pillars of Don Bosco, and try to practise it in everyday life, experiencing Mary as Mother and teacher.

Our entrustment to Mary must therefore be dynamic: entrusting ourselves to Mary means making the gesture of self-giving to respond generously to a mission to be carried out, and welcoming with confidence the help of the one who guided Don Bosco.

We feel particularly called to live the commitment of the whole Church, aware that we are heralds and witnesses of the Gospel. The moments of greatest importance for us are the monthly meeting on the 24th of each month, our weekly prayer meeting, the feast of Don Bosco, the feast of Mary Help of Christians and active participation in the life of the Salesian community shared with all its groups belonging to it.



FOR THE FUTURE

We ardently desire with all our heart that the association will be enriched more and more with families and young couples who share formation and prayer. We ask Mary Help of Christians for a special grace: the launch of youth groups who want the spirituality and apostolic commitment of ADMA to be their own, since we believe that, together with families, the "grafting" of young people is a providential gift for the Association. Indeed, their contribution in taking care of the new generations is significant. Certainly, the way to go is by combining youth ministry and community ministry. Even in this pandemic period, thanks to the various virtual platforms and social networks, we are able to stay united in prayer and, despite the distance, to pray the Holy Rosary, to adore Jesus in the Eucharist and to experience together moments of formation and sharing.

Our suggestion for the Primary ADMA is to continue to sponsor the days of World Spirituality and to send material for formation programmes for aspirants and young people.



The paper can be read at the following site:

www.admadonbosco.org

For every communication you can contact
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THE REGULATIONS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS TO STUDY OUR IDENTITY AND PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

ARTICLE 1 - DEED OF FOUNDATION (first part)

After he had built the shrine dedicated to the Help of Christians, following the indications he had received in a dream, on 18 April 1869 Don Bosco founded the *Association of Devotees of Mary Help of Christians*, to spread devotion to Our Lady under this title.

For Don Bosco, devotion means entrustment, imitation, and apostolic and educational passion. In particular, it includes a commitment to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth, to cooperate in the mission of Christ for the salvation of souls under the maternal guidance of Mary, recognizing the Eucharist as the source and summit of all life.

In close relationship with the construction and consecration of the Basilica, Don Bosco erected a sanctuary built with "living stones", the devotees of the Help of Christians, whom he wishes to be associated in a special way with his work. We are therefore called to witness with our lives that we belong to Mary and that with her we commit ourselves to be instruments of love and peace in the situation in which we live.

Don Bosco's apostolic vision understands Marian devotion as an element of strength to consolidate and protect the Catholic faith of the Christian people. He did not attribute any merit to himself but said: "I am not the author of the great things that you see: it is the Lord, it is Mary Most Holy, who deigned to use a poor priest to perform these works. I didn't add anything of my own. It is Mary who built her house. Every stone and every ornament mark a grace." Still to this day the light of her maternal intercession radiates from this Shrine throughout the world.

Andrea and Maria Adele Damiani