

ADMA on line

ASSOCIAZIONE DI MARIA AUSILIATRICE
PRIMARIA - TORINO VALDOCCO

24th October 2011

Monthly message

Mary invites us to be witnesses to the love of God

A true Christian and a genuine devotee of Mary is called to **live life as witness**. All the events of life even the most painful and difficult ones, can in this way be changed into an opportunity to bear witness, without any other support than the strength of love and the convictions of faith. In a hostile environment, one of rejection and of lack of satisfaction it is still possible to live according to the Gospel. This is no time for resignation or passivity. Nor is it the time to say that things were better in the past. It is the time to bear witness, overcoming with one's freedom, that of the children of God, which enables us to make of our lives a gift for others. A person who is not ready to serve as did Jesus and Mary is not free. This cannot be improvised; it doesn't happen in just a day, but requires constant effort: "with your perseverance you will save your souls." Today more than ever, we are invited to be constant in our efforts, since persevering in doing good we shall save ourselves and make the world a better place to live in. Someone who has met the Lord, who has experienced His love cannot but proclaim and take him to other brothers and sisters. Someone who has experience of the gifts of God and the faithfulness of his love is called to bear witness to it in their words and in their life so that they may become reasons for joy and the reawakening of faith also for others.



In recent months we have received a number of examples of people's witnessing to their joy in taking part in the International Congress on Czestochowa, from those who have been touched by the faith witness of the Polish people. Many has asked us how they can help our groups to grow and be renewed through the involvement of young couples and the presence of young people. For example it is a consolation to know how the Youth Group of ADMA in Torino-Valdocco has grown thanks to the "word of mouth" of many young people who have invited their friends, companions at school, young people in difficulty. In addition, the local, provincial and national meetings have been an encouragement in the faith journey as they travel together and share their faith experiences and pass on the joy of belonging to ADMA.

We are helped in this by the teaching of **Pope Benedict XVI**. As we invite you to appreciate the talks he gave in his recent apostolic travels in Germany, we report several passages from what he said during Marian evening prayer at Wallfahrtskapelle in Etelsbach. "It is not self-realization, the desire for self-possession and self-formation, that truly enables people to flourish, according to the model that modern life so often proposes to us, which easily turns into a sophisticated form of selfishness. **Rather it is an attitude of self-giving, self-emptying, directed towards the heart of Mary and hence towards the heart of Christ and towards our neighbour:** this is what enables us to find ourselves ... With Mary, God has worked for good in everything, and he does not cease, through Mary, to cause good to spread further in the world... Yes indeed, in life we pass through high-points and low-points, but Mary intercedes for us with her Son and helps us to discover the power of his divine love, and to open ourselves to that love. Our trust in the powerful intercession of the Mother of God and our gratitude for the help we have repeatedly experienced impel us, as it were, to think beyond the needs of the moment. **What does Mary actually want to say to us, when she rescues us from some trial? She wants to help us grasp the breadth and depth of our Christian vocation. With a mother's tenderness, she wants to make us understand that our whole life should be a response to the love of our God, who is so rich in mercy.** "Understand," she seems to say to us, "that God, who is the source of all that is good and who never desires anything other **than your true happiness, has the right to demand of you a life that yields wholly and joyfully to his will, striving at the same time that others may do likewise.**" **Where God is, there is a future.** Indeed – when we allow God's love to pervade and to shape the whole of our lives, then heaven stands open. Then it is possible so to shape the present that it corresponds more and more to the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then the little things of everyday life acquire meaning, and great problems find solutions."

Mr. Lucca Tullio, President
Fr Pierluigi Cameroni SDB, Animatore spirituale

Training Path 2011-2012



2 - Don Bosco, apostle of the Help of Christians, and the Rosary (Fr Pierluigi Cameroni)

"All those who John as a child testify to his love of prayer and to his great devotion to the Blessed Virgin. **John must have been very familiar with the holy rosary**, because from the earliest days of the Oratory up to the last years of his life he always insisted that his boys recite it every day. He never subscribed to the idea that a religious community could be exempt from reciting these prayers for any reason at all. **In his view it was a necessary practice of piety for proper living as important as his daily bread in sustaining his strength**

and keeping him alive " (BM I 68).

Little John Bosco learned to love and pray the Rosary at the school of Mamma Margaret, as he himself says: "Her greatest care was given to instructing her sons in their religion, making them value obedience, and keeping them busy with tasks suited to their age. When I was still very small, she herself taught me to pray. As soon as I was old enough to join my brothers, she made me kneel with them morning and evening. **We would all recite our prayers together including the rosary**" (*Memoirs of the Oratory*). Mamma Margaret excelled as a teacher of prayer, and prayer is a family matter, a question of faith sharing.

Having learned from his mother little John was not ashamed to get his friends to say the rosary and prefaced his games and entertainments with prayer and catechesis, beginning that style of education which would make him a pastor of youth. "At Becchi there was a field in which grew several trees. One of them, a pear tree that is still there, was very helpful to me then. I used to sling a rope from it to another tree some distance away. I had a table with a haversack on it, and on the ground a mat for the jumps. When I had everything set up and everyone was eager to marvel at my latest feats, **I would invite them to recite the rosary** and sing a hymn. Then standing on the chair, I preached to them or, better, repeated as much as I could remember from the explanation of the gospel I had heard in church that morning; or sometimes I recalled episodes from something I had heard or read. After the sermon there was a short prayer, and then the show began. At that point you would have seen, just as I am telling you, the preacher transformed into a professional acrobat. I did the swallow trick and somersaults, walked on my hands, tied the pouch around my waist, swallowed coins and then produced them from someone's nose. I multiplied balls and eggs, changed water into wine, killed and chopped up a chicken and then brought it back to life again so that it crowed better than before. These were part of my stock in trade. I walked the tightrope like an ordinary path, jumped and danced on it. and hung by one foot or one hand, sometimes by two. This went on for several hours. At the end of it I was tired. A short prayer brought proceedings to a close, and everyone went about his business." (*Memoirs of the Oratory*).

It was thanks to praying to Mary that Don Bosco finally came to rest with his boys at the Valdocco oratory. After so much wandering about and so many rejections, finally on Palm Sunday 1846 he was able to announce: "Sunday, next Sunday, we'll go to our new Oratory, which is over there in Pinardi's house." And I pointed the place out to them. Wild enthusiasm greeted this announcement. Some ran around shouting and jumping for joy; some stood stock still; some raised their voices, I would say, to yelling and screaming. They were moved like people who feel so intensely happy that they cannot express their feelings. Overcome with deep gratitude, we thanked the holy Virgin for hearing and answering the prayers which we had made to her that very morning at Our Lady of the Fields. **Now we knelt for the last time in that field and said the holy rosary.** After that, everyone went home." (*Memoirs of the Oratory*).

Describing what the more common practices of piety were at the Oratory it is said: "But **dearest to**

his heart was the holy rosary. For this reason he had included brief meditations for all fifteen mysteries. He had the boys recite a third part of the rosary every Sunday and holiday, and he exhorted them fervently to say it daily in their own homes, if at all possible. As long as he was the only priest at the Oratory he would recite five decades with his mother every day; when boys began to board there, he had them recite during Mass on weekdays.

From the time the Oratory was established in Valdocco until the present day, its walls have echoed every morning to the words of this prayer so dear to the heart of Mary and so effective in times of trial for the Church. Only once a year was the rosary recited in its entirety in the chapel, on the eve of All Souls' Day for the souls in purgatory, Don Bosco never failed to take part in it kneeling in the sanctuary and often leading it himself " (BM III 13-14).

It is good to remember that at the Becchi, Don Bosco's native village, on the ground floor of his brother Joseph's house in a corner he had made a small **chapel, and Don Bosco dedicated it to Our Lady of the Rosary.** The little chapel was opened by him on 8 October 1848. There, every year until 1869 the saint celebrated the **feast of Our Lady of the Rosary**, making it a solemn occasion with the presence of the band and the choir of the boys from Valdocco. That place was **Don Bosco's first centre of devotion to Mary** and witnessed the beginnings of the Salesian Congregation. Here, in fact, on 3 October 1852, Michael Rua and Joseph Rocchietti received the clerical habit. Certainly too in this chapel Dominic Savio also prayed on 2 October 1854, on the occasion of his first meeting with Don Bosco and in the following two years during the autumn holidays at the Becchi.

Don Bosco considered the recital of the Rosary one of the fundamental points of his method of education. In February 1848 Marquis Robert d'Azeglio, a personal friend of Charles Albert and a Senator of the Kingdom, paid a visit to the oratory. Don Bosco accompanied him as he visited the whole house. The Marquis expressed his delight but with one reservation. He described the time spent on lengthy prayers as time wasted.

He particularly did not like at all the recitation of fifty Hail Marys one after another. He suggested that such a tedious practice be dropped.

- "Well," replied Don Bosco amiably **"that practice means a lot to me. I would say that my whole undertaking is based on it.** I wouldn't mind giving up many other important things, but not this. If it should become necessary, I would sacrifice even your very valuable friendship rather than abandon the recitation of the Rosary (Cfr BM III 207).

The saint of youth was certainly one of the most fervent supporters of the practice of the Rosary as a safeguard against the wiles of the devil, to make the faith flourish, to obtain and to protect the purity of the young, as a defence against error, to help the Church: it was the **rope of salvation** with which to strike, conquer and destroy all of hell's demons, as he explained in a famous dream he had on the vigil of the feast of the Assumption in 1862. "I want to tell you a dream I had some nights ago I dreamed that I was at my brother's home at Castel d'Asti with all my boys. While they were at play, a total stranger came up to me and asked me to go with him. He took me to a meadow alongside the playground and pointed to a huge, ugly snake, over twenty feet long, coiled in the grass. Frightened I wanted to run off, but the stranger held me back:

"Get closer and take a good look," he said.

"What?" I gasped. "Don't you realise that monster could spring on me and gobble me up in no time?"

- "Don't be afraid! Nothing of the sort will happen. Just come with me."

- "Nothing doing! I'm not crazy!"

- "Then stay where you are," the stranger replied. And he went to fetch a rope.

- "Take this end," he said on his return, "and grip it tightly with both hands. I'll hold the other, and well let it dangle over the snake."

- "And then?"

- "Then we'll snap it across its back."

- "You must be crazy! The snake will leap up and tear us to pieces."

- "No, it won't. Leave that to me."

- "Count me out! I have no intention to risk my life for a thrill of this kind!"

Again I tried to run away, but the stranger once more assured me that I had nothing to fear because the snake would do me no harm. He talked so persuasively that I stayed on and agreed to his plan. He went around to the other side of the monster. We stretched the rope and then snapped it across the snake's back. The monster immediately sprang up and struck at the rope, but as it did so, it ensnared itself as in a noose. "Hold on!" the stranger shouted. "Don't let go!" He ran to a nearby pear tree and tied his end of the rope to it. Then he came to me and tied my end to the iron grating of a window in the house. The snake kept furiously struggling to free itself, writhing, thrashing, and flailing about. In its fury it tore itself to pieces, scattering its flesh over the area, till it was slashed to a mere skeleton.

The stranger then untied the rope and coiled it up. "Now watch very carefully!" he said as he put it into a box and closed it. By this time the boys had swarmed about me. Within a few moments he opened the box. We looked in and were astounded to see **the rope shaped into the words Ave Maria.**

- "How did that happen?" I asked.

- "**The snake,**" the man replied, "**is a symbol of the devil, whereas the rope stands for Ave, Maria, or rather the rosary, a succession Hail Marys with which we can strike, conquer and destroy all of hell's demons.**" (BM VII 143-144).

Also the great missionary enterprise which launched the Salesians into the whole world bears the signs of the Rosary as Don Bosco saw in one of his missionary dreams: "I saw that our missionaries mingled with them and taught them, and they docilely listened and learned quickly. They readily accepted the missionaries' admonitions and put them into practice. As I stood watching I noticed that the **Missionaries were reciting the rosary as they advanced, and that the savages closing in from all sides, made way for them and joined in the prayers**" (BM X 47).

This devotion to the Rosary accompanied him to the end of his life as this comment from 1886 bears witness: "During the Informative Process, Father Francis Cerruti testified to his state of health: 'When his headaches, his congested chest and semi-blinded eyes prohibited his taking part in any kind of work, it was both painful yet consoling to see him sit on his shabby sofa for long hours, at times in semi-darkness, because his eyes could not stand the light. Yet he was always calm and smiling, his rosary beads in his hand...I myself am firmly convinced that the last few years of his life were practically one long and continuous prayer to God'" (BM XVIII 219-220).



Prayer

O blessed Rosary of Mary, the chain of beads which links us with God, a bond of love which unites us with the Angels, a tower of salvation in the assaults of hell, a safe haven for the shipwrecked, we shall never leave you again. You will be for us comfort in the hour of our agony. To you our final kiss as life ebbs away. And the final murmur on our lips will be your sweet name, O Queen of the Rosary, O our dear Mother, O Refuge of sinners, O Sovereign consoler of the afflicted. May you be forever Blessed now and for ever, on earth as in heaven (Blessed Bartolo Longo).



VENEZUELA. Between 2 and 4 September at Caracas there was the XXII Assembly and the XXIII National Meeting of ADMA. After greeting the local groups from La Dolorita, La Vega, Boleíta, El Vigía, Pan de Azúcar, Puerto Ayacucho, San Félix, Puerto la Cruz: Divino Niño, La Santa Cruz, Sierra Maestra, Valencia Centro, Coro, Judibana, Villa Marina, Maracaibo, and Mérida) the **National President, Ingrid González de Gómez**, spoke about “Formation in personal life”, while the **Provincial animator Fr Luis Azzalini**, presented the three year programme on the way to the bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco. Special attention was given to the delegation which took part in the VI International Congress of Mary Help of Christians in Poland. In

the afternoon of 3, after Fr Azzalini had spoken again about the subject of entrustment to Mary which Fr Carelli had presented at the Congress, at the “Milagorsa” church the act of entrustment to Mary Help of Christians, Mother of the Salesian Family was made by all the animators. Young people from Dolorita helped with the music with their group of *Hijos e Hijas de María (HHM)*, part of ADMA, who also described their experiences in Poland using a video and photos. The final day was dedicated in particular to the conclusions and the proposals from the various groups in the light of what the Congress of Czestochowa had proposed. There was also a visit from **Fr Luciano Stefani, Provincial of Venezuela**, who helped us reflect on the effectiveness of the ADMA, on what we are doing to be significant and to make a contribution through our life with Mary, as a means of evangelisation, attracting the young and forming ourselves so as to be able to pass on our experience. In addition he exhorted us to carry out assessments at local level to see what progress the Association was making and what needed to be done to make it more alive, renewing it in quality and quantity and maintaining links with the Salesian movement and with the Salesian Bulletin. He then presided at Mass and gave a homily full of faith and love of God, the mission to know and to imitate Don Bosco today. In the final farewell the National President invited those present to pass on to those absent their experience of the meeting and the conclusions which had emerged, as well as living up to the commitments undertaken: to continue to work above all for the Kingdom of God and of his Mother, Mary Help of Christians, for our families and for our country. The apostolate needs to be constant, drawing children and young people to conversion and involving them so as to give a new look to the ADMA. By going out of church and from home along the streets visiting families, especially those more at a distance so that the word and the message of Jesus might reach them. In this our great help is the Lord who gives us as guide and leader Mary Help of Christians (Ingrid González de Gómez - National President).



COLOMBIA – On 10 and 11 September at **Bucaramanga** there was meeting of the ADMA groups in the area, at which 50 people from Bucaramanga, Contratación, Barrancabermeja, Cucuta, Pamplona took part. With me there was the Provincial President, **María del Pilar Lucas**, and the Deacon Juan Diego López. Topics dealt with were: preparation for the bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco, Mary in the Aparecida document and in the life of Don Bosco. I also visited the **Agua de Dios** group, a group in formation which will make its commitment in December. Finally on 23 September in the auditorium of Juan Bosco Obrero-Bogotá, there was a Mass at which Fr Luis Bernardo Mur, Provincial Delegate for the Salesian Family presided and Fr. Carlos Julio Aponte, Rector of the house, Fr. Jaime García and Fr Daniel Mendez concelebrated. The young Salesian students of theology contributed to the liturgy. The reasons for the celebration were the feast of Don Bosco, the beginning of the period of preparation for the bicentenary if the birth of Don Bosco and the **commitment of 24 new members of the ADMA** (Fr Luis Bernardo Mur, Provincial Delegate for the Salesian Family).



Gruppo dei nuovi soci di dell'opera Juan Bosco Obrero di Bogotà



Incontro Gruppi ADMA a Bucaramanga



P. Carlos Julio Aponte, animatore locale, Pilar Lucas Presidente ispettoriale, P. Luis Mur, Delegato ispettoriale per la Famiglia Salesiana



Gruppo ADMA di Agua de Dios



SICILY –REGIONAL ASSEMBLY – On Sunday 18 September 2011 the elections were held for the Regional Council of Sicily, at San Cataldo, in the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Sixteen ADMA centres were represented (Alcamo, Caltagirone, Calatabiano, Canicattì, Capaci, Catania Maria Ausiliatrice, Catania San Francesco, Floridaia, Gela, Marsala, Messina SS.Pietro e Paolo, Modica, Palagonia, Palermo Ranchibile, Pozzallo, Taormina and a group of ADMA young supporters from San Cataldo). Also present were the Regional delegates, **Fr Edoardo Cutuli and Sr. Carmelina Cappello**, the Vice Provincial of the F.M.A. Sr. Gina Sanfilippo. It was a special grace for everyone also to have pre-

sent the World Animator Fr Pierluigi Cameroni, who led the day of formation for the local Councils in Sicily. After a time of prayer prepared by Fr Sebastiano Leotta, there was a report on the VI International Congress of Mary Help of Christians, in which thanks were offered to the Holy Spirit for the marvels accomplished. The hymn of the Congress *Totus Tuus* was also sung. Fr Pierluigi gave a commentary on the opening prayer and emphasising the fruits of the World Congress: the renewal through devotion to Mary the popular dimension of the Salesian charism. Mary Help of Christians is Our Lady of difficult times and not only those in Don Bosco's day, but also nowadays when we are experiencing a great crisis of faith, in a culture in which everything is relative everything is allowed. We cannot build a Europe without Jesus Christ, overturning the values of life and of faith. Czestochowa was a choice inspired by God since the Poles have a very strong faith, and their love for the Madonna of Jasna Gora, is very striking, seen also in the many pilgrimages to the sanctuary, some undertaken on foot for hundreds of miles to render her homage. After the showing of a video on the history of ADMA and its present situation Fr Pierluigi invited those who had taken part in the great event at Czestochowa to speak about their experience. At Mass celebrated by all the ADMA delegates present, Fr Pierluigi recommended everyone to work with humility, a spirit of service and witness, in order to be credible Christians and true disciples of Jesus. In the afternoon in assembly there were the elections for the new Council after which the outgoing President, Mrs Luigina Ciaramella, gave a short account of the previous four years. The following were elected: Auteri Giuseppe, Ciaramella Luigina, Petitto Venera, Canale Maria, Burrascano Nicola, Russo Rosario and Fichera Maria Grazia. The meeting ended with the prayer of entrustment to Mary and the gift to all those present of a small flower containing the image of Our Lady of Czestochowa. Petitto Nerina –Regional Secretary).





PHILIPPINES – MESSAGE FROM ADMA PHILIPPINES

Congratulations to Fr Cameroni, Tullio, ADMA Turin, SDB-FMA Poland and to all the organizers of this momentous event: the VI ADMA International Congress in Czestochowa, Poland! Our Eucharistic Lord and Our Lady, Help of Christians are the reason behind the success of this event. They made everything possible. It is truly the hand of God at work in this event! It is truly a Salesian family event...we're able to meet different faces, culture and nations around the globe...as brothers and sisters in Christ! I would also like to congratulate the young people who participated in the congress. They are very enthusiastic in their love for Jesus and Mary! They made the event a taste of "World Youth Day"...very Salesian...very youthful... Again thank you very much for this very beautiful, unforgettable and divinely-inspired event! Together, let us bring Jesus and Mary in our homes....let us bring them back to the world!

We would like to invite all ADMA members and groups to look back on all the texts and material collected and to make use of it for training. (www.admadonbosco.org).

By Christmas, the DVD in 4 languages (Italian, Spanish, English and Polish) will be ready, along with the various contributions and videos from the Congress. ADMA's national congresses which are interested, should write down the language and number of copies they wish to receive by writing to adma@admadonbosco.org

On the website (www.admadonbosco.org) can be found ADMA's guideline commitments for 2011-2012.

The paper can be read at the following site:

www.admadonbosco.org/index.php?lang=en

and here: www.donbosco-torino.it/

For every communication you can contact the following email address: pcameroni@sdb.org