

## MARY INVITES US TO OPEN THE DOOR OF THE HEART



On the eve of Christmas, Mary invites us to open the door of our hearts to the encounter with our Saviour and Redeemer. Then the Lord will work to free us from the bondage of sin and darkness, so that we can embark on the journey of conversion of heart and life until we can say: "My God and my all." **Praying with the heart means opening it in such a way that God can come and dwell there.** Then the heart becomes the place of prayer, where we listen to God and turn to Him with the confidence of children.

"When Christ enters the human heart, he brings a twofold light: the light of conscience that reveals the sins of the past, and then the light of peace, the hope of salvation. "The lantern that Christ carries in his left hand is the light of conscience." (John Ruskin). "Behold, I stand at the door and knock ... " (Rev. 3:20). It's true: Jesus stands at the door of our hearts, day and night. Even when we listen, we doubt if it is him talking. Stay and wait for the slightest signal, even a subtle response that allows him to enter. He wants us to know that whenever we invite him, he always comes, silent and unseen, but with infinite power and love. He comes with the precious gifts of the Holy Spirit. He comes with His grace and with His desire to forgive and heal us, with a love beyond all imagination, the same love he received from his Father: "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you ... "(John 15:10). He comes with the burning desire to console and strengthen us, lift us up and transform our wounds. He brings us his light to dispel our darkness and our doubts. He comes with power to bring us to him and to take away whatever makes us weary. He comes with his grace to caress our hearts and transform our lives, and offers his peace to our souls.

He asks us to open our hearts to Him, to acknowledge that we are sinners, in need of his salvation, his forgiveness and his love, to have the humility to accept his mercy and let ourselves be renewed by Him. Being a Christian means living and bearing witness to the faith in prayer, in works of charity, promoting justice and doing good.

In the joy of Christmas we send our good wishes to all our ADMA members and groups, as we turn to Mary with the words of Pope Francis in his exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*: "We implore her maternal intercession that the Church may become a home for many peoples, a mother for all peoples, and that the way may be opened to the birth of a new world. It is the Risen Christ who tells us, with a power that fills us with confidence and unshakeable hope: "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev 21:5). With Mary we advance confidently towards the fulfilment of this promise, and to her we pray: *Mary, Virgin and Mother, you who, moved by the Holy Spirit, welcomed the word of life in the depths of your humble faith: as you gave yourself completely to the Eternal One, help us to say our own "yes" to the urgent call, as pressing as ever, to proclaim the good news of Jesus.*"

## WAY FOR FORMATION 2013-2014

### «Da mihi animas, cetera tolle»



#### 4. Spirituality of daily life and work

##### Ordinary life as the meeting place with God

Don Bosco proposed to his first collaborators and to the young people at the oratory a way of living the Gospel in depth, without detaching from life: *living in the presence of God*.

For Don Bosco everyday life was the natural space for everyone to grow in perfection, the place where all can respond to their human and Christian vocation.

This intuition of the value of everyday life brings us to value the whole of creation as God's gift: life, nature, man-made material things and interpersonal relationships.

In solidarity with the world and its history, we *share the difficulties and joys of people* from the social context to which we belong, searching together to find in them the signs of God's will.

##### At the school of St. Francis de Sales

Don Bosco was inspired by St. Francis de Sales recognizing him as a master of a spirituality that was simple because it focuses on the essential, popular because it is open to all, attractive because of its emphasis on human values and, for all these reasons, particularly helpful in educational action. In his seminal work *Treatise on the Love of God*, the holy Bishop of Geneva talks of 'ecstasy'. This word does not refer to extraordinary spiritual phenomena, but rather, according to the etymology of the term, going out from self and reaching out to others. It is the experience of those who allow themselves to be attracted, convinced and conquered by God, penetrating the mystery of God more and more. For St. Francis de Sales there are three forms of ecstasy:

- *Intellectual ecstasy*: awe and amazement at what God is, but also wonder at the great work he has done in creation and still does in people's lives and in human history. It is a look that matures through meditation on the Word: the Word opens our eyes and makes us see things through the eyes of God.
- *Affective ecstasy*: an experience of God's love for us, and an increasing desire to respond to it and be nourished by this love, so that we are willing to give our life and our talents for His glory and for the sake of the Kingdom; it presumes constant vigilance, purification of the heart and the practice of prayer;
- *The ecstasy of action and life*: for St. Francis de Sales, this is the one that crowns the other two. Intellectual ecstasy could result in speculation and affective ecstasy in mere sentiment, but the ecstasy of action reveals a generosity and a freely given gift that can only come from God, and develops into concrete and dynamic dedication for the good of people in various forms of charity.

## The gift of work and professionalism

Don Bosco taught his young people to spend their time in tasks that are useful in personal life or in the community in a healthy educational and creative way. He himself was an example of a life fully devoted to work and he wanted his Salesians to be recognized by the spirit of enterprise and hard work.

Looking at this experience, we see in *Valdocco a true school of work*: it developed a pedagogy that teaches young people to practise this way of living their spirituality.

Work is conceived as an integral part of God's plan for all. It leads us to defend the dignity of all work and the human person as the subject of it. This knowledge enhances the joint efforts of Salesians and lay people for the education of young people.

Professionalism is demanded of us, according to the characteristics of our specific vocation. This means aiming at the greatest possible perfection in our work and leads us to accept willingly the demands of hard work, commitment and constant ongoing education. Discipline and a sense of duty become the path of asceticism for us, and a concrete measure of our spiritual maturity.

## Work and Temperance

The exercise of apostolic charity includes the need for conversion and purification, the death of the old man so that the new man can be born and develop, in the likeness of Jesus Apostle of the Father, who is ready to sacrifice himself daily in apostolic work.

To give oneself and empty oneself means allowing oneself to be filled by God to bring God as a gift to others. Detachment, renunciation and sacrifice are essential elements, not out of love of asceticism but simply out of love. There is no apostolate without asceticism and there is no asceticism without mysticism. Those who put themselves entirely at the service of the mission do not need extraordinary penances. It is enough for them to accept with faith and love the difficulties of life and the demands of apostolic work.

The asceticism recommended by Don Bosco has several aspects: *asceticism of humility*, seeing ourselves as no more than God's servant; *asceticism of mortification*, becoming masters of ourselves, guarding our senses and our heart and being vigilant to not let comfort-seeking destroy our generosity; *asceticism of courage and patience* to persevere in action when it collides with the harsh reality; *asceticism of abandonment* when events bring us closer to the cross of Christ.

## Initiative and adaptability

This means the desire to do good and to seek the most appropriate ways to achieve it. At stake are: the correct reading of the needs and practical possibilities, spiritual discernment in the light of the Word of God, the courage to take the initiative, creativity in finding new solutions, adapting to changing circumstances, the ability to collaborate, a willingness to check and evaluate. Fr Philip Rinaldi reminded the Salesians - and his statement is valid for all groups of the Salesian Family - "This flexibility to adapt to all forms of doing good must be continually rising in the bosom of humanity. This is the spirit of our Constitutions, and if ever we introduce a change contrary to this spirit, it will be over for the Society." There are many words of Don Bosco that recommend the spirit of initiative: "In things which are for the benefit of young people in danger or which serve to win souls to God, I push ahead even to the point of temerity." "Always comply where you can; we must adapt to modern needs, and to the ways and customs of the various places, as long as we do not have to do against our conscience." It is not just a matter of strategy, but a spiritual fact, because it involves a continuous renewal of oneself and of one's action in obedience to the Spirit and in the light of the signs of the times.

## ATTILIO GIORDANI DECLARED VENERABLE

On 9 October 2013, Pope Francis authorized the Congregation for the Causes of Saints to promulgate the decree of the heroic virtues of the Servant of God **Attilio Giordani, layman and father of a family, and Cooperator of the Salesian Society of St. John Bosco.**

He was born in Milan (Italy) 3 February 1913 and died in Campo Grande (Brazil) 18 December 1972. Attilio Giordani was an exemplary husband and father, animator and catechist in the oratory, missionary and evangelist, and a model Salesian Cooperator. Now he has been declared Venerable. The Rector Major Fr Pascual Chávez wrote:

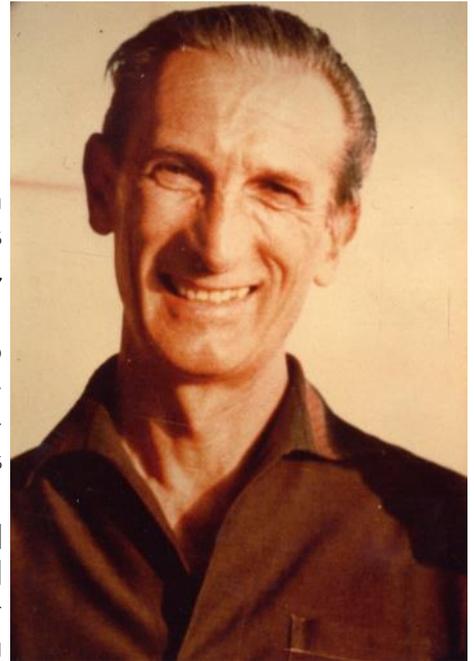
**Attilio Giordani is a model of family life.** He was a husband and father, a man of great faith and serenity. He lived in austerity and evangelical poverty, deliberately chosen to allow him to assist the most disadvantaged. His marriage with Noemi in May 1944 was not just a date in their lives but above all a sacrament of Christ that gives the grace of sanctity and indissolubility in everyday life and in the education of children. The family stayed together because Attilio and Noemi supported each other in prayer and the practice of charity.

**In the oratory, Attilio Giordani was a model in the practice of the Preventive System.** At nine years old, he began to attend the Salesian Oratory of St Augustine in Milan. There, as a young man working for other young people, he was consistently committed in joyful animation of groups. For decades, he was a zealous catechist and an ingenious Salesian animator, always simple and serene. He knew and used all the educational tools of the preventive system to animate the young people: animating liturgy, formation, presence in the playground and in leisure activities such as theatre. He used to organize walks with the young people of the oratory, compose songs and sketches, run charitable lotteries, treasure hunts and parish sports for young people, and he never forgot that the centre of Christian joy is the love of God and neighbour. He was a real educator, and at the heart of his educational mission he put the proclamation of the gospel and the ministry of catechism, lived with creativity and credibility.

**"Attilio Giordani is a model of lay Salesian holiness, lived in joy.** He became a Salesian Cooperator and lived his faith as a lay person inspired by Don Bosco's project of apostolic life. He developed his personality as a man and as a Christian of joy. His humour was a direct expression of a consciousness dominated by faith in Christ. He also gave witness to his Christian faith with courage and kindness. He remained joyful even in difficult situations such as during the period of military service and war, or in his work situation. He lived in the world without being of the world, frequently going against the tide. Towards the end of his earthly life, he shared his missionary vocation with his family, leaving as his legacy the enthusiasm of a life given for others: "Our faith must be living" and "The measure of our faith can be seen in the way we live."

The different groups of the Salesian Family involve many lay people in their mission. We are aware that there cannot be full involvement, unless there is also a sharing of the same spirit. A major priority is for lay people to live Salesian spirituality as they share responsibility in the educational ministry. The appealing figure of Attilio Giordani is in this sense a source of inspiration *for the formulation of a lay Salesian spirituality.*

In this Year of Faith and in the final year of preparation for the bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco, the witness of Attilio Giordani is really a precious gift that encourages us to form lay Salesians with a strong Salesian identity, resolutely committed to bringing the message of the gospel in family life, in education and in social and political life. I conclude my message by renewing the invitation to promote a movement of prayer that we may soon be able to honour Attilio among the glorified members of our Salesian Family and pray to him as a special intercessor for families and for our oratories."



## CHRONICLE

### BARI

On 24 October 2013, three new members joined the Association: Genchi Maddalena, Giacquinti Carmela and Sscimiotto Giacomina. The group is led by the Parish Priest of Holy Redeemer of Bari, Don Mario Sangiovanni, and has fifty-two members. The Council is as follows: President, Grandolfo Misceo; Vice-President, Cassano Nicola; Secretary, Allegrini Emanuella; Treasurer, Losavio Antonia; Councilors - Cardinale Anna Maria, Rosaria Franco, Patruno Domenica, Tomasicchio Domenica and Volpicella Maria Pia.



### SICILY - REGIONAL MEETING OF ADMA COUNCILS



On 10 November 2013, the regional meeting of the ADMA Councils of Sicily took place at S. Cataldo (Caltanissetta). About 150 participants reflected on Don Bosco's dream of the Ten Diamonds. During the meeting, about twenty young people applied to join the Association.

## ADMA PRESENTATION at the Advisory Body of the Salesian Family in the Southern Italian Province

On Saturday and Sunday, 9 and 10 November, Fr Pierluigi Cameroni, Spiritual Animator at world level, was invited by Fr Angelo Santorsola, Provincial Delegate for the Salesian Family for the Southern Province, to speak about the Association of Mary Help of Christians to all the members of the Provincial Advisory Body. The meeting, held at the Salesian House of Soverato (Catanzaro), was a joyful occasion, getting to know and share with one another, with the aim of making the history, identity and mission of ADMA better known.



Fr Pierluigi also had the opportunity to meet the **ADMA group of Soverato (Catanzaro)**, a group of more than 20 members. The group was re-established in 2010 with the election of the president, Sig.ra Nadia Rombolà, and members of the Council. The parish priest of the time, Fr Tobias Carotenuto, encouraged this revival and today it continues with the assistance of the current Rector of the Salesian Community, **Father Louis Martucci**.

## TURIN - ADMA YOUTH RETREAT

On Sunday 24 November, a group of about twenty young people of the Turin group gathered to share a day of formation with Fr Pierluigi and Fr Enrico Lupano, and with two married couples Sergio and Cecilia, and Clare and David. The topic was the experience of Dominic Savio in the founding of the Sodality of the Immaculate Conception, as a charismatic reality to be repeated in our day with new forms and expressions.



During the sharing there was a strong message of growth in the journey of faith, making good use of the time that God gives us, building friendships and positive relationships where we can help each other, anchored to the columns of the Immaculate Conception and Eucharist, and bearing witness to their faith. Like Dominic Savio, we try to be "shining stars, living stars, stars that guide."

## CUBA - Eighth National Meeting of ADMA

From 15 to 17 November 2013, the House of the Daughters of Mary Help of Penalver (Havana), hosted a gathering of representatives of the Councils of the local ADMA groups of Cuba: Santiago de Cuba, Manzanillo, Güines, Santa Clara, Manguito and La Habana ( St John Bosco Parish, Church of Mary Help of Christians , La Jata - Penalver). They met under the leadership of Fr Miguel Angel Fernandez, Delegate of the Salesians in Cuba, and Mrs. Anna Gloria Alvarez, National President of ADMA, together with the Coordinating Council.

The main points of the Meeting, proposed by Fr Miguel Angel Fernandez, were inspired by the recent strena the Rector Major. Fr **Manuel Morancho**, Delegate for Youth Ministry, spoke on Spirituality, one of the themes for this third year of preparation for the bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco.

One of the highlights of the meeting was the prayer in common. Following the example of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, who consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, those present joined in the prayer intention of ADMA International entrusting the mission of the Association and our young people to the Virgin. There was joy at the presence of the group of Young ADMA Members of the Parish of St. John Bosco, La Víbora ( Habana ), the result of the work and witness of the members and of the National President .

The witness of filial love for the Virgin gives us good reason to work for the revitalization of the different groups that continue to grow in this Salesian Cuba, sowing the seed of service and growth in faith with the aid of Mary Help of Christians, our Mother and Teacher. *"It is all her work."* This was more than a slogan, the President said. After three years, the Virgin has made possible this meeting of our members, in a spirit of reconciliation and fraternity. With renewed spiritual inspiration and faith in Christ, ADMA continues its work as an active group of the Salesian Family in Cuba.





### ROSARIO (ARGENTINA) - START OF FAMILY ADMA

On 24 November, a formation programme was started officially at the parish of Mary Help of Christians in Rosario, for Family Groups of ADMA. In the picture are Juan Cruz, Zu Vera, Gloria Beatriz Acosta, Normita Regueira, Mechi Vivar, Yanina Asensio, Diego Aranda, Luciano Piñeiro and Juan C. Marangoni. With the group was Fr Aldo Tobares, Provincial Spiritual Animator, ARN.



*Merry Christmas  
and Happy 2014*

The paper can be read at the following site:

[www.admadonbosco.org/index.php?lang=en](http://www.admadonbosco.org/index.php?lang=en)

and here: [www.donbosco-torino.it/](http://www.donbosco-torino.it/)

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